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GREGORY VII.

A Tragedy,

WITH AN ESSAY ON TRAGIC INFLUENCE:

By R. H. HORNE,

Author of

"CORRUPT MEDICINE" "THE DEATH OF MARLOWE," &c.

1st ed.

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A Tragedy

[with An Essay on tragic influence]

By RICHARD HENRY HORNE

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AN ESSAY ON TRAGIC INFLUENCE.

IN the various discussions concerning tragic composition which occur in public and in private, everybody must have observed, that, after certain vague allusions to the effects of terror and pity, and the excitement and pleasure derived from reading or witnessing the ebullitions of passionate energies, the understanding seemed to advance no further as to the influence which was, or might be, exercised by such compositions and representations. Were the question started as to what are the *essential* differences between the last scene of an acted tragedy and a public execution—the crime and the punishment being supposed as the same in either case—it may be assumed that there are very few private circles, even of educated people, in which any clear and sufficient grounds of distinction would be elicited. Yet everybody feels that the one is an elevating, the other a degrading influence. The examination of this question is surely worthy of some pains.

German literature and criticism have done much to destroy our vulgar notions of *a* moral and *the* moral;

but this is not the only mist that requires to be cleared away. We wish to have lucid, unequivocal, single-minded definitions of the words which are brought forward upon all important and difficult occasions. For instance, we wish to have a fixed definition of the locally-variable word "duty,"—with which my ever admired friend Mr. Carlyle, among others, sometimes turns short round upon his readers at a crisis of moral philosophy. His profound critic, Joseph Mazzini, in "The Monthly Chronicle," is apt to do the same. We all know very well, or ought to know, what we mean individually by the word "duty;" but what do philosophers mean? What is the universally applicable law which they suggest, but do not propound? The duty of the dramatist is simply to be true to his men and women.

But this is not all. While the vast majority of authors and critics are treating of tragic composition of the highest class, with the fame of ages to assist and guarantee admiration, they speak of the passions as mighty elements and elevating influences. On nearly every other occasion, they speak of the passions as if they were all of the very worst class of four-footed beasts. Now, the things remain the same, though moralists may shift their seats. An integral difference can never originate with a mere difference in the point of vision. But it would appear as if this was thought. Except under the commanding truth of the influence just mentioned, together with the speculations of a few profound philosophers, the passions are regarded as gross vices, to be denounced, and avoided, and suppressed by mankind, and hidden from the sight of their Creator. When an author views them with one eye to "the

moral," and the other to his own respectable position, he either denounces them outright, or shifts their existence to some other class of society. There are few things more amusing than to watch these "fast and loose" antics of perplexed moral weakness; these dancings between the red-hot bars of human passions. With due admiration of Lord Kames for much well-intentioned philosophy and close criticism, it is impossible to help laughing at the closing sentence of his celebrated chapter on "Emotions and Passions." "I shall only observe," says he, "that in a polished society, instances of irregular passions are rare, and that their mischief doth not extend far." So that we are first cast into a puzzle-box full of escape valves, as to the difference between regular and irregular passions;—the former being, perhaps, permissible now-and-then in a polished society; the latter, not:—after which, it is assumed that their mischief doth not extend far, however extensive their injury among all other classes! What is the occasion of all this weakness and vacillation? It is because men's minds are in a state of utter confusion, oscillating between nature and convention; truth and falsehood; the ideal and the real; between elevating passion and debasing passion (both abstract and practical); and also because they have been taught, with great difficulty, to think that they become reasonable in proportion as they confound various and opposite passions into one frightful heap, to be denounced and shunned accordingly as *the* passions.

Yet, when you think of Prometheus, Lear, Macbeth, Orestes, Othello, Medea, or Hamlet, there is none of this disgust and degradation! Are we still to

exclaim with Shelley, "How green is this grey world!" The subject may require volumes; but is it not possible to be intelligible, as to the elements of truth, in a few words? Only two questions need be asked:—"Are you a believer?"—if you are, then, "What do you especially believe?" Let us understand one another. The question involves the deepest results; but the world is abounding in sincere men, if their hearts be but touched to the core; and where once an extreme truth is set afloat upon the mighty waters, it is certain in time to be gathered up by those who feel it strongest.

Out of the heart's passionate exaltation, its anguish and despair, its desolate oblivion of time and the world's life, the essential truth of things cries with a loud voice, infallible as lasting. Its impulsive generalisations are universally intelligible, springing as they do from the very fountain-head of enduring nature; while even its most exceptive individual fallacies are found to strike, by however oblique a blow, upon the very key-note of some general facts familiar to the experience of mankind. We behold the nerves quivering with emotion and preparatory purpose; the secret motives, conscious or unconscious to the individual; we trace the incipient resolve, the perilous self-deception, the "reason pandering will;" the compromise between will and conscience, alternate or simultaneous; the incongruities and complexities; the cruelties anomalously mixed with love; the imperfect love at bottom of revenge, with the purified and entire love, too late attained, bursting in anguish out of the consummation of revenge; the first principles of given passions; the final consequents: our common humanity

recognises itself, and exults, and trembles, and melts in sympathising or remorseful tears.

Not for themselves only, as in real life, do the ideal characters of profound tragic creation act and suffer. They may think no more of us and our affairs than the towering Pride of yesterday (which ascended step by step against nature in all her habitual instincts, to cast itself from a monument, and be dashed to pieces in our common-place streets); but their mental history burns in the footways of their departure. It is the revelations of passion by genius; the intimacy communicated through ideal art; it is "the cause, my soul," which turns ignorance and indifference into shuddering comprehension, and dogmatism or levity into solemn-thoughted grief. It is the *knowledge* of all their struggles that finds a way into successive hearts, and multiplies in imagination the fiery aspiration, with the grandeur, the exultation, the love, the terror, the satisfaction, or the pity, that attends their doom. We act and suffer with them; *their experience is made ours*; and from the yearning grave of their gone existence the fatal histories of their lives arise, and warn us of ourselves. For them there is no repose of cold and quiet death; their ashes are ever alive with "wonted fires," ready at the electric touch of sympathising imagination to spring afresh into active existence, and pour forth their souls, like Memnon at the rising of the sun, even though it "set in blood." Do we sincerely feel that the awful spirit of Clytemnestra is indeed at peace? that the inspired delirium and prophetic agony of Cassandra can never again burst upon the visionary sense in the darkness of night, or come upon the wind, moaning afar, over lonely twilight fields? Can we

believe that Othello's torment or his desolate remorse are at an end? that Macbeth, no longer maddened with the anguish of equivocal despair, fights upward at the airy fates who quire his fall?—that Ophelia's fair eyelids are no longer burnt dry and discoloured with encrusted tears;* her distracted flowers all scattered; her sweet, soul-penetrating voice, now choked in earth?—that Lear's aged, thorn-torn hands shall be wrung no more, and his white, dishevelled, rain-dripping locks, lie silky smooth in vaulted sleep? Is it credible that Hamlet's ever-teeming brain-pan, hot with aching thoughts, has become vacant as poor Yorick's skull; and that he, to whom man and the universe were made but for incessant contemplation, should now be able to feel, to speculate, to resolve, and hesitate no more? These ever full and high-wrought beings are not dead: like others, their consummate peers, they live to do and suffer as of yore, and the work they shall accomplish amidst progressive generations is yet only in the infancy of its operation and influence.

The excess of Life in those whose passionate activity was accompanied by intellect, imagination, designs, and deeds, becomes transmissible in full action of heart and head from age to age, exactly in proportion to the truth and completeness with which their characters and actions are chronicled, and brought home to the intense abstract interests and individual sympathies of mankind. They present a constant food for study, deep interest, and self-improvement; the food increasing with the extent of the consumption. They offer to the student a more varied and profound knowledge of human nature than he can elsewhere obtain (such revealments only

accidentally and partially occurring in actual life); while the improvement to those who read in private, or witness in public merely to be amused and excited, is, perhaps, still greater from the unconsciousness of the influence so powerfully and subtly exercised over their feelings and imaginations.

The excitements of tragedy, its end and aim, and the influences it exerts, are not limited to such as are to be derived from terror and pity. This long-established error—derived from a narrow acceptance of Aristotle's meaning, and filtered through all the chief critics of successive ages down to the present time—is perhaps one secret reason why no new subjects, and no new forms of tragic composition, in these our weak and undaring times, have been ventured, or even suggested as possible. But may not a mighty aspiration and a passionate act be accompanied with no predominant terror; its failure and its fall with no predominant pity? May not the sympathy with a burning hope of good; the antipathy and hatred excited by powerful efforts for evil, constitute a sufficient interest? Can we not feel sorrow and anguish for a great heart crushed, without our strongest emotion being that of pitying the possessor? In addition to all this, there are mixed influences in which terror and pity are blended. Power and pathos have numerous forms, many as yet only partially developed by tragic authors. Else, where would be the manifold deep principles of life, and its "majestic pains?" Tragedy is open to all great passions.

—"Thou hast great allies :
Thy friends are Exultations, Agonies,
And Love, and man's unconquerable mind."

Lord Kames observing that "the commentators upon Aristotle, and other critics, have been much gruelled about the account given of tragedy by that author," was very near discovering the fallacy of the limited meaning in which the ancient philosopher's proposition has always been understood. Kames says, that "pity, indeed, is here made to stand for all the sympathetic emotions." This certainly manifests a disposition to enlarge the acceptation; but he soon continues the argument as though no such enlargement had been intended. But if pity is "made to stand for all the sympathetic emotions," terror may be made to stand for all antipathies; and what then becomes of our present limited notions about "terror and pity?" These remarks on old-established discrepancies are only to be regarded as hints thrown out to excite examination, the results of which will be likely to cast wider open the doors of the expanded heart, and emancipate the mind from school habits and narrow theories.

The moral effect of works of ideal art is humanising, chiefly because they excite refined emotions without advocating any dogmatic or exclusive moral. They appeal to the heart and the imagination, not to the measurements of the understanding; and this is why their fine essence is very apt to float off and escape at the material touch of analysis, discussion, and criticism. Their true mission is to enlarge the bounds of human sympathy. A drama with a single moral can only be a great work when at the same time it develops universal passion; otherwise it is worse than useless. A particular moral, to which everything

else is made subservient, can only produce a hard, limited, or sectarian effect, and has a direct tendency to generate purblind bigotry to some contracted principle; the frequent cruelty involved in the exercise being mistaken for high morality, which refuses to sympathise with, or even tolerate, any exception in kind or variation in degree. It was universally the custom in this country till within these last few years, to ask, "What is the moral of the piece?" The answer was always absurd or infantine; frequently turning upon the "naughty" parts of the story, some quotation from a school catechism of maxims, or a common proverb, but more commonly one of the ten commandments; which latter, in a Christian country, we should have thought might have been taken for granted, without so many illustrations. Shakspeare is manifestly a profound and universal moralist; yet there is no particular moral laboured at in any of his dramas. What is *the* moral of "Othello?" An instructive grandmother would obviously say,—unequal marriages are dangerous, or, you should not kill your wife from jealousy! What of "Macbeth?" You ought not to listen to wicked counsels and fancies; or, if you will murder a king to obtain his crown, you must suffer for it. What of "Lear?" We ought not to be unreasonable, exacting, and passionate, when we grow very old; or, we ought to be too prudent to give away all our property before we die. What of "Hamlet?" This is very difficult. You ought to know your own mind, but you should not think too much of your thoughts; you ought not to obey your father's vindictive ghost; murder comes home to people; you

should not feign much madness in order to hide the fact from yourself of feeling "touched;" you ought to marry the woman you love, not desert and abuse her, kill her father, and drive her to insanity and suicide; avoid inconsistency, &c.

A deeply comprehensive passage occurs in Shelley's fine preface to the "Cenci," wherein he meets the foregoing question in all its main bearings. "The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual, horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant, and kind."

A dramatist should not only refrain from moralising, on his own private convictions, but he is also forbidden to make his characters utter any morals except those which arise out of, and are identical with, the peculiar natures of such characters, and the circumstances in which they are placed. His art does not justify him in systematically applauding or denouncing any morals or opinions of society, at any period, either of his drama, or of his own time. The drama is not to be used as a pulpit; its direct morals and its moral tendencies must all shine spontaneously from the aggregate mass in

action, reflected variously, according to the natures from whence they are derived or elicited.

One of the most striking instances of the mischief which is occasioned by mistaken notions as to the means of producing a moral effect, is to be found in the frightful, unredeemed reality of public executions. Real horrors are destructive of all moral influence, as gross realities, of whatever kind, destroy poetic effect. The reason why tragedy is humanising and elevating, and a public execution the converse, is because the former is ideal, and has its foundation in elementary truths, and high-wrought mental incitements and purposes, with which we are made intimate; while the latter is a gross reality, either on manifestly low mental foundations, or, if elevated by passionate imaginings, the subtle working is unknown to us, and nothing remains but the revolting realities of crime, and its punishment,—consequent on accidental legal discovery, not on remorse, or the extremities of the will. The former appeals to abstract and imaginative passions, recognised by the aspirations and pathetic emotions of our common humanity; the latter is directly and literally addressed, not only to ordinary depravity, but to the depravity which the occasion enhances or creates,—that is, a mixed sense of corporeal fear, the excitement of cruelty at second hand (which presents a poisonous salve to the conscience), and vulgar, heartless curiosity to see how a fellow-creature will pass the dreadful extreme of all things, and fall from the dark precipice of life into his Maker's hand. Meantime, there is abundant merriment and larceny among those (perhaps the only friends of the less fortunate wretch) who are robbing the excited and

edified multitude. Among this multitude, thus debased beyond themselves and their ordinary vices, not one man could probably be found whose moral condition at the moment, could it be compared with that of the wretch on the brink of eternity, would not render him more justly amenable to stand in his place. The victim is thrust beyond the pale of humanity, not by his crime, for which he may hope to find mercy elsewhere, — but by the merciless spectators. Whatever the crime, there is always something grand and solemn in exploring the depths of human nature. The wisest or the shallowest sifter-in-judgment would tremble and be mute, were the criminal's thoughts and passions all laid bare to view. In the worst acts, it is probable, we might find within the individual something exculpatory, if not redeeming; something which, under the circumstances, seemed right; something, at heart, the very opposite to his one fatal act: whereas, it is probable that in this mere insulated, outward act, there is nothing to be seen but depravity.

The propensity of modern times to reduce everything as much as possible to a tangible reality, originating in the political spirit, and the growing tendency to level all fanciful distinctions in conventional institutions, has done incalculable mischief in its sweeping application to the ideal arts, and their moral tendencies. "A creative imagination distils events, casting aside such as it does not need, new shaping much that it does, and, by the aid of fancy, calls forth a new existence. Regulated by a profound judgment, amounting almost to an instinct, it works on the principles that Nature has displayed in her creations, and thus harmonises with

the ideas already possessed by the mind. It never invades the province of reality ; for it knows that its own existence would be shattered by the contact. * * * It is one thing to be well stored with a comprehensive knowledge of realities, as pabulum for the fancy, and another to introduce them, crude and undigested, into the creations of the imagination.* The great majority of artists, in discussing this topic, confuse the question at the very outset by asking, "Are we not to copy and imitate nature and reality as closely as possible?" This is a vague interrogation, which, nevertheless, admits of a comprehensive answer. We should only render the poetry of nature, the essential effects, individualised and generalised at the same time: we should not make the thing real, but a vivid illusion, embodying only the higher qualities of the reality. But artists and critics commonly confound imitation with illusion, poetical nature with mechanical art; the terms fly about indiscriminately in the argument, and then they make a riddle of it. Let us clear the question by propounding a startling reality—one which would actually exceed the Newgate-literature of our time. After a trial for life, in the shape of a drama, imagine a public execution actually taking place on the stage! Can anybody doubt the shock of such a realisation of the struggles of nature and a revolting matter of fact? This would, indeed, furnish an unanswerable argument against the present rage for vulgar realities in what can no longer be worthy of designating as our "literature of *fiction*," and a crucial test of its morality. But a great tragedy, as a work of ideal art,

* See the masterly and comprehensive pamphlet entitled "The Past and Present State of Dramatic Art and Literature."

removing the actual horrors and disgusts from their tangible facts and details, is so much the more suggestive to the imagination, and, consequently, so much the more lasting in its effects. Its elevating influence is to be found in our acknowledgment of the thoughts and passions of the chief agents who produce such strong sympathies and antipathies; in its exercise of the heart by disinterested emotions; in its inciting, assisting, and teaching us to know and fear ourselves, whereby we become proportionately "wise and tolerant."

In the construction and execution of all great tragedies, it is a fundamental law, that a compromise of passion to any other principle of action, perils the truth of the whole work, together with its moral tendency. Perhaps this was why Hazlitt placed "fortitude of mind" as the first requisite of a tragic writer. In the present timorous condition of hypocritical affairs, we have certainly "fallen upon evil days," and yet weaker hearts,—or many of the evils would presently be trampled under foot, and scattered to the winds. The tragic writer, or he who would in any form deal with the greater passions, is now met at the very threshold of all publicities (unless he can enforce his appearance) with a long list of forbidden things, and a general requisition for mediocrity and compromise; whereby the passions, being prevented from all extreme transgressions, can present no sufficient contrast or effect in the anguish of their results: their strong and beneficial influence is, therefore, neutralised, if not utterly destroyed.* But this unfortunate contin-

* A striking instance has recently occurred. In the Preface to the historical tragedy, entitled "Mary Stuart," the following humiliating

gency does not affect the present subject, in which I speak of *principles* which are for all times, however dormant their exercise, and however the attempt to awaken them may for a time be opposed. The passions, then, which are called into action should be developed in all their natural fulness of imagination and will, without one atom of consideration for any local moral, mawkish sentiment, or conventional rule of conduct, in any country or period of the world: as much as possible without the consciousness, during composition, of the existence of any one law but the passionate inspiration which creates and directs the work. This is the "one thing needful" for modern dramatists to feel and know. It is stated in all the

admissions are ingenuously made: "Mary's attachment to her favourite could not be rendered prominent without *the greatest danger*." What danger? That the public would not bear it? If so, then, either the public is not in a fit condition of feeling and intellect to bear a revival of genuine dramatic literature on the stage,—or else the writer did not perceive how he could avoid grossness, and was, so far, deficient in the means of his art. It could not be rendered prominent, "nor evaded," proceeds the Preface, "without suppressing *the only circumstance* that could palliate, or, indeed, account for the sanguinary act. I do not presume to say that I have surmounted these difficulties,—that I have produced scenes which, without countenancing the imputation of actual guilt, are still sufficiently marked by *indiscretion* to soften the otherwise unmitigated horror of the catastrophe, but it was my intention to have done so!"

The success of the attempt has been fatal. Indiscretion, imprudence, and "such small deer," are assumed to soften a tragic horror, *otherwise* unmitigated! The effect produced on the mind by all this compromise, is an immoral effect; that of seeing a high-minded and accomplished man, whose only fault, among a set of illiterate and half-savage feudal nobles, was that of indiscretion (superinduced by the indiscretion of a queen), subjected to a cowardly butchery—intended as "the moral." It seemed a horrible reality on the stage, and was probably very like the fact,—without its cause. Of the dramatic abilities displayed by the author, no sort of disparagement is intended; but only to object to his principle of tragic composition, in this instance, as weak, erroneous, and destructive of the true aim and influence of tragedy.

purity of its naked truth; and because its principles, if misapplied, are to the last degree dangerous, so nothing will be easier than to accuse the promulgator of "damnable doctrine," though the foundation of such a charge may only exist in the wilful or ignorant perversions of his meaning. But truth once fairly on its legs, continues to stand, and eventually walks its appointed course. It is essential to tragic truth that its actions be governed by tragic principles only. By these means, the reader, and, far more, the spectator, is carried beyond himself; thrown completely off his guard and all his social restraints; gives way to his unrestrained impulses, long craving for larger action; and in proportion as he has sympathised with the daring resolves, he trembles at the accomplished deed, which, for the moment, seems half his own: his heart aches, and his soul yearns, with the anguish of the fall, or tremblingly hugs itself in its own escape from a bloody grave—with immunity from a tremendous doom.* All genuine tragedies, whatever their deficiencies in execution, must possess the elements of greatness, being tran-

* "We delight," says Burke, "in seeing things, which, so far from doing, our heartiest wishes would be to see redressed. * * * It is absolutely necessary that my life should be out of any imminent hazard before I can take a delight in the sufferings of others, real or imaginary, or, indeed, in anything else from any cause whatsoever. But then it is a sophism to argue from thence, that this immunity is the *cause* of my delight, either on these or on any other occasions." All this is clearly true; but the consciousness of such immunity is often an additional satisfaction. Let terror or anguish once pass the bounds of the ideal; let it be brought home to us, and all pleasure vanishes in an instant. Let the actual "hazard" strike too forcibly upon the senses, or the imagination, and we can only recover the feeling of pleasure by reverting to the consciousness of immunity. The comparatively few exceptions of natures that find a wild delight in the excitement of actual horrors which may presently involve themselves, does not affect the present argument.

scripts of some of the most intense thoughts and emotions which can visit this our mortal existence. Tragedy is the exercise of the feelings, the antagonism of all hardness of the heart. The extremity of its distresses softens the obduracy of natures, frequently so hard as not to be otherwise reducible to sympathy; and yet more generally, of natures deadened by the unvarying flow of the common current of everyday business, which is but too apt gradually to petrify the passages to the heart, though the heart itself, when reached, may be one of real kindness and humane capacity. Natures are elevated and instructed unconsciously. Taken unawares, and thrown quite off its guard, the will offers no opposition to the impulse and the course of genuine feelings; the sympathies have free play through the imagination, and experience no repugnance from any sense of compulsion, social duties, prejudice, or worldly discretion. We feel with others, and for others, without any interest except the ties of our common humanity. In public representations, large masses of men experience emotions together, which are more generous, more just, and less selfish than under any other circumstances of their lives; and emotions, as Lord Bacon has remarked, are the more readily and strongly experienced when multitudes are assembled together. This latter circumstance is attributable to the enhancement of mental and moral courage under such circumstances; to the increased faith in a common nature; and to the radiation, reflection, and irresistible atmosphere of passionate sympathies.

The knowledge of man and woman as they are at heart; the insight into the secret thoughts and passions

of nature at its most deep and momentous periods of speculation, purpose, and impending action; and the means of comparing all these with the internal state of the individuals after the consummation of all their passions and designs, can be obtained with equal completeness from no other source.

Of all characters made known to us by the most entire, subtle, and diversified means possible—which is by genuine dramatic literature—their value as studies of human nature is to be estimated in an exact ratio with the elevation, the originality, and the completeness of their creation. If you can walk round them to see the back of the head, as well as the forehead—with all its insecure pretension and display (taken singly), and look into their thoughts and sensations far beyond the words they utter, then they are as certainly great studies, as it is certain that no man, of whatever intellect, by a casual reading, can judge of how much is to be gained by their existence, or what accession they offer to our stock of knowledge. If, on the other hand, they be mere flat-fronted transparencies, of which you see nothing but heads dressed and faces made up for a passing occasion, no deeper thoughts and insights suggested than the actual amount of plot-meaning conveyed by the speeches “put into their mouths,” no extraneous expletives can help out the deficiency. But for the “perilous stuff” comprised in a really great tragedy, to what bounds of time and scrutiny shall we limit our study of it for a discovery of the secrets of active nature? It has required the profound study, the elucidation, the arguments, and illustrations of most of the finest intellects that have risen since the time of Elizabeth, in

order to obtain any due estimate (apart from the excitements of representation) for Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet, &c., and to render even their more obvious revelations generally appreciable. Were any works of a similar order to appear for the first time in the present day, they would be estimated in a far less period of time, though still, perhaps, in some cases, requiring forty or fifty years. The other great dramatists of the Elizabethan age—Webster, Marlowe, Decker, Chapman, who are by no means so actable in themselves, have had no pains whatever taken with them to render them actable; and, though containing scenes of the highest genius, have been comparatively little studied—where is their estimation? The spirit and the genius that penetrated the heart of man, and could enclasp the stars, has not yet passed the English channel! Their mighty creations of passion have never been heard of throughout the little span of Europe. Even the public of their own country has scarcely any cognisance of their works. Yet these men were all inspired dramatists; which fact whoso denies, should certainly never pretend to estimate the yet higher and more complex creations of Shakspeare. Are we, then, so indolent?—have we no room for more?—is life too short?—or is it not rather that new studies can only begin with acted dramas, and that a series of new and great acted dramas can only begin with a free stage, and the abrogation of all patent monopoly?*

* It is a most gratifying thing to see the patent theatres “doing well” at intervals, amidst their long periods of doing worse than nothing; but no temporary or even permanent well-doing on their part, will give sufficient scope for the best chances of a new dramatic literature. Why should not an accomplished artist like Mr. Macready, and any other gen-

The genuine drama, and tragedy in especial, is the strongest influence from without (except the Bible) which asserts the unadulterated principles of nature, as opposed to convention. We cannot, of course, assume it to be more pure and elevating than any other of the high classes of poetry and literature; but it is more entire, direct, and palpable in its working out of causes and effects of passionate nature. When appropriately acted, its influence is stronger than any oratory, however sound and eloquent. An artificial age, with all its refinements, real and assumed, must always generate a morality of its own, which, weakening and circumscribing the emotions of the heart, and reducing im-

plemen competent to the task, be permitted to take any theatre possessing a licence, and have the very reasonable power *to accept and produce the best dramas they can obtain*? At present, the outlets are so very few, and the passage so narrow and so thronged, that the struggle is degrading to dramatists, and has a visible tendency to render them abject, and therefore incapable of greatness. If, in opposition to the old proverb, it be true that even continued practice seldom "makes perfect," it is equally clear that to have *no* means of practice in an art which, perhaps, of all others, requires the most, is rather liable to place the mastery of skill at a very ethereal distance. Considering this circumstance, the artistical aptitude manifested even in the early productions of various authors who have written successfully for the stage—the last instance being displayed in Mr. Leigh Hunt's truly beautiful drama of "A Legend of Florence"—is sufficiently surprising to all those who are aware of the difficulties to be overcome. Equally certain may we be of the progressive result, when the doors of all theatres are legally thrown open to the reception of the best dramas they can obtain. When writers possessing such high tragic powers as George Stephens and R. Z. Troughton, find a ready means of learning their art and exercising their influence on the stage, we shall presently have all that certain of our friends have long thought impossible. Already the thing is growing up, like the gourd in the night, while they are dreaming, or "looking another way." Dramatists certainly cannot create actors of genius, but they will create sufficiently good actors; and dramatists, as well as the public, must then take their chance for the genius whenever it appears. All that is demanded is the Freedom of the Stage.

pulse to the narrowest bounds of action, will never bear the test of being carried back to the strong and healthy foundations of nature without making the truth of things apparent. Every great tragedy sends us back to these foundations, whether we are aware of it or not, and nature is thus vindicated in the secret heart; is redeemed (in proportion to the noble sympathies experienced) from the perversions of luxury, false refinement, and effeminacy of soul; and preserved from the absolute tyranny of the manifold vices, intolerance, and corrosion of heart, which have always hitherto been encouraged by what is termed a high state of civilisation.

Disgust at the confusion of follies originating in limited and degrading notions of morals and passions, has led to an opposite extreme of late years, expressed in the maxim of "Art for Art's sake." But amusement and pleasure, and love for skill, should be the means of good; not the end of all artistical effort. "Art for Art's sake" is at once nonsensical and wrong; for *who* is Art? and what is it, except by its influence on mankind at large? It is one thing to let effects "take their chance;" and another, not to care what effects are produced. We should not work for Art's sake, but for Nature's sake.

It will have been observed, that in the foregoing remarks, I have suggested not only the kind and degree of influence which tragedy has hitherto exercised, but that more deep, diversified, and extensive influence which it would exercise were all its properties called forth. On the latter position, very much more might be said; but at present it would be useless. The relative position of dramatists—the only originators of any

genuine novelties on the stage—is so absurd with reference to the actors and managers, whom they should teach (except where previous ability renders it unnecessary, or natural incompetency impossible) how to embody their ideas, that there can be, as yet, no means of attempting anything really new upon the state of the public mind and feeling. The utmost attention a dramatist would find, in so unheard-of a case, would be comprised in an amused condescension, similar to that with which a king and queen might listen to the last new visionary. But new things are always practically possible in the world. If tragedy, and the collective drama, has been assumed in these pages to contain more elements of general nature and individual character than are ever sought to be found and studied, this is no more wonderful than may be observed in all other subjects, wherein the more we search the more we find. One of the chief excitements to the world's progress is its discoveries,—little as we may be aware of our ignorance in any given particular *previous* to the discovery. As to the acceptance or rejection of any really original drama, such a work never appeals to individuals seated in cool-headed criticism in order to think of its effects; but to the excited feelings of large masses of men. This excitement is the only test of contemplated effects: from reading is derived individual opinion only, given under disadvantages. But as there are no other ready means of prejudging the fitness for representation, of course the double difficulty of the circumstances produces a double lock; and the waters have not yet risen in sufficient strength to burst through the barriers.

While considering the kind and degree of appre-

ciation awarded to actors, in comparison with dramatists (who are the soul of all that the stage embodies; the producing power which all its intellect and energy are required to illustrate), I am certainly not anxious to increase the passion for "actor-worship," which has for so many years been a peculiar characteristic of the play-goers of this country. But it is only just to the feelings of those who are hardly to be blamed for any exclusive appreciation they may receive, to admit, to the full extent, the elevating usefulness of all genuine actors. A great actor does not wholly die (as it has always been said) when he is "seen no more;" his noble ardours live beyond the grave, and exert an influence on men's characters and emotions, more enduring than we are at all able to estimate.

Such are the chief grounds of a belief in tragic principles, and the influence of tragic compositions. Let the modern dramatist be assured at least of the sincerity of this belief, by one who would account it no small ambition were he thought worthy to be a champion of the fallen race. These few pages could not, of course, pretend to offer elaborate arguments, illustrations, and demonstrative reasons for "the faith that is in us." An attempt has, however, been made to grasp the main pillars of the ancient, high, mysterious Temple—long darkened and debased by ignorance and idolatry, or shrunk and disjointed by sensualism and a withered will—and to shake the whole fabric to its base, so that mankind may be roused to examine the lofty branches of its power, and search into the depths and breadths beneath, which support its awful structure.

OH, THAT IT WERE POSSIBLE WE MIGHT
BUT HOLD SOME TWO DAYS' CONFERENCE WITH THE DEAD!
FROM THEM I SHOULD LEARN SOMEWHAT, I AM SURE,
I NEVER SHALL KNOW HERE.

WEBSTER.

PREFACE.

HILDEBRAND, a monk, and the son of a carpenter of Soano, in Tuscany, was born A.D. 1013. He raised himself to power in the Church; through his influence successively deposed two Popes, and elected two others; smote the last of these in the face during high Mass, because his Holiness had acknowledged the authority of the Emperor; ascended the Papal chair himself, by forcing his own election; established the supremacy of the Church over all other sovereignties; and created a new system of things, which endured nearly five hundred years after his death.

Short of stature, but deep-built as a temple wall, I have supposed Gregory to possess great physical, as well as mental, powers. Of his character and actions, this is not the place to speak. The period of his death is ante-dated by dramatic license, and its circumstances may easily be imagined as coincident with his fall from supreme dominion. Such an end seemed very natural for one who had previously both wielded and directed "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and who, after the final struggle which terminated his individual power—although it completed, in every sense, his

victory—with passionate eloquence celebrated Mass for the last time as Pope, while the blood was streaming around. This was, virtually, the scene of his final triumph and death; nor did he actually survive it long.

With regard to the historical character of Gregory VII., as well as many of the most important actions and events of his life, historians frequently contradict each other and themselves. According to some writers, he was all devilishness and “black art;” with others he was a lofty saint; but few of them deny that he was a great man, if not a greater conqueror, in his way, than the Alexanders and Cæsars. The best connected accounts will, however, be found in “The Life and Pontificate of Gregory VII.,” by Sir Roger Greisley, 1832; —“*Histoire des Republiques Italiennes*,” by Sismondi;—in Bayle’s Dictionary, &c. See also “Historical development of the German Empire,” by Putter, 1790.

Of the death of Pope Alexander by assassination, no proof exists, and the best authorities seem against it. But after being subjected to the indignity of a blow, while in full pontifical state, and then locked up in a cell with orders to fast and pray, any ultimate violence might have been expected from one like Hildebrand, who was waiting for his absence. On the day of Alexander’s burial (some say on the day of his death), Hildebrand caused himself to be elected to the pontifical chair. But should my version of the matter be thought to cast an undeserved stain upon the memory of Gregory VII., be it recollected that his were most turbulent times; that frequent insurrections occurred, which were originated, fomented, and headed by the priests opposed to Gregory, and that numbers of priests were killed in various ways—though it might be invidious, as well as presumptuous, to say how many should be considered as equivalent to a Pope. In short, I am willing to acknowledge the “dark-dealing” with Alexander as a kind of dramatic concentration of these events. The death of

Godfrey, however, seems to have circumstantial evidence of considerable strength. But as for the different versions of an attempt said to have been made by Gregory to destroy the Emperor by causing a great stone to be "so ordered and trimmed" that it might be dropped upon his head while he was praying before a shrine in the church of Santa Maria, they all appear fabulous. Many more wonderful things of Gregory than this are both gravely and furiously narrated by Cardinal Beno, "arche-priest of cardinals," and the mad-headed little work was translated and published in the black letter, by "Wynkyn de Worde, Flete Street, 1534." A copy of this is to be found in the British Museum.

All the characters in the present tragedy are historical, although nothing is to be discovered in history of some of them beyond their names and the side on which they ranged themselves during the mighty contests between the Papal and Imperial powers. Justice has been morally aimed at for all; and should any reader, learned in their histories, feel disposed to make an exception with reference to certain points in the character, conduct, and assumed fate of the noble and disinterested Matilda, I can only exhort him to a yet more careful consideration of the known circumstances of her life; of the opinions current among her contemporaries; and to make those deductions of the imagination as well as the reason, which such data naturally suggest.

Notwithstanding their manifest originality, I should have been glad had the striking situations in this tragedy—I may say this, as they are, for the most part, not my invention—been somewhat reduced in number and brilliancy.

"We may not hope from outward forms to win,
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within."

But the truth is, that the very nature of the subject rendered much of this imperative as a matter of art, for the

just presentation of the given characters and events. Most of the external situations and effects have been selected, moulded, and grouped from historical facts, with such poetical licenses as the general structure of the whole demanded.

For very important assistance in the revision of these pages, I have to express myself gratefully indebted to the judgment, refined taste, and kindness of my friends Mr. Leigh Hunt and Mr. John Forster.

And now, if it be permissible that one of "modern earth" should attempt the expression of primitive feelings, at a period when the world's heart has been declared by certain able and influential writers, to be comparatively exhausted, let it not be thought irreverent to appropriate the uplifting prayer of the old inspired poet, George Chapman,—bearing, as it does, in conclusion, that solemn moral corrective to all boundless aspirations, whether Gregorian or artistical, which terminates the prospect of a few years :—

"Loose my working soul!
That in her highest pitch she may controul
The court of skill; compact of mystery;
Wanting but franchisement and memory,
To reach all secrets! * * * * *
And he who shewed such great presumption,
Is hidden now beneath a little stone!"

HYMNUS IN NOCTEM.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HILDEBRAND, *Abbot of St. Paul, afterwards* GREGORY VII.

HENRY IV., *Emperor of Germany.*

GODFREY, *Duke of Bouillon, Husband of the Countess* MATILDA.

GUIDO, *Archbishop of Milan.*

CENTIUS, *a patriotic Noble of Rome.*

TANCREDI, <i>Count of Tusculum</i>	} <i>Aristocrats, favouring</i>
FABIO, <i>Count of Galeria . . .</i>	

the Emperor.

COUNT EBERARDUS, *a German Noble.*

CARDINAL BRAZUTE.

PETER DAMIANUS, *a Monk in the confidence of* GREGORY.

MATILDA, *Countess of Tuscany, in her own right; married to*
GODFREY.

AGNES, *Dowager Empress, mother of* HENRY IV.

*Ambassadors, Cardinals, Bishops, Nobles, Monks, Officers;
Guards, Soldiers, Attendants, Populace, &c.*

XXXX

GREGORY VII.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Cloisters of St. John Lateran.*

Enter GUIDO, CENTIUS, and EBERARDUS.

GUI. (*to Eberardus*). Archdeacon of Rome!

CEN. And by a lynx-trap,
Wherein he snared a wise and watchful man,
Whose face had sharpened with his midnight thoughts.

GUI. Archdeacon of Rome, and Abbot of St. Paul!

EBE. This Hildebrand was but a lowly monk,
'T is not long since,—so have I heard, my lords?

CEN. Lowly!

EBE. Methinks he 's learned and devout?

GUI. Far more ambitious; darkening beneath a cloud
Of large designs. You are deceived, my lord.
The pious father with the pausing step—
Once pacing slow through deep dim-lighted walls;
A moving image pondering o'er its clay—
Now plants his heel with regular ascent;

Not full of grace, but echoing rapidly,
As though his war-horse waited at the gate.

EBE. I know him powerful: the present Pope
Was by his influence seated in the chair.

GUI. In opposition to Rome's highest nobles,
Who Cadolaus chose. And wherefore thus
Did Hildebrand stretch forth his iron arm?
Not from pure love, not from pure reverence
For the mild virtues of Pope Alexander,
But that he knows him weak, and governs him—
The gilded organ-pipe of his high will.

CEN. 'Tis strictly true, my lord; and presently
Swarth Hildebrand to aged Mantius hied—
The late Archdeacon of Rome—beseeching him
To rest him from his cares, and in mean time
Make him his deputy. Obtaining this,
After some pious scruples touching duty,
Unto Pope Alexander straight he sped,
And blazoning his credentials for the office
Rendered by Mantius in full confidence,
Swore that his grace was superannuate,
Unfit for duty, and should be deposed!

GUI. (*looking upward*). Ay, thus it was: bear witness!

EBE. By such means
Hath he obtained this last new dignity?

CEN. He hath: be sure of it. He is a man
Who drives his conscience like a slave before him,
While as a task-master it doth follow others.
This gives him vantage ground.

GUI. Whereon he wields
A scourge that makes the Vatican pavement stones
Cry sacrilege and heresy! But full soon,

Now that imperial Henry is prepared
To leave our church's tutelage, and assume
His sceptered rights, this haughty abbot's deeds
Shall be made palpable, as will his throes
When the red lights of doom shall wanton o'er him !

Enter HILDEBRAND, behind.

EBE. He must be humbled.

CEN. 'T were no easy task.

GUI. (*to Ebe.*) Humbled, my lord ! degraded utterly !
Yes, humbled first, and then cast to the dogs
That howl through Rome, filled with his devilishness.
Sir, your imperial master must know all.

HIL. (*coming forward*). He shall !

EBE. You have heard serious words, my lord.

CEN. Sir, there's none here who would retract his
words.

HIL. Why should he ?—What ye have said—referring,
doubtless,

Unto the late archdeacon—is most true.
Old and infirm ; incompetent through his cunning,
Which riddled policy, 't was fit he left us.
Moreover, of his time he ill disposed :
Squared down astrology for private ends,
And innovation bred of controversy ;
Read books of vanities and high romance,
Like my lord Guido's " Commentaries."

GUI. How !

Profanity—rank blasphemy ! Ye heard him ?

HIL. Still, the sometime archdeacon had his virtues.

CEN. We spake of the present archdeacon, Hil-
debrand.

HIL. It is the same—it is the same, my friends,
Whate'er ye spake.

GUI. (*to Ebe.*) The placid arrogance!

CEN. Think of meek piety; then hear him preach.

EBE. Archdeacon, you lack courtesy.

[*Organ peals within.*]

HIL. My lords,
The mass your souls' devout attendance claims!
We bless the Emperor's journey with the day
That gives the last tint to his ripened age
For temporal government. Firm be his faith!
Our prayers he needs; for much, I fear, his sense
Hungers for luxury, pomps, and violent wars;
Where to, in all, I judge his nature apt,
By the hot humours of his private talk;
The sanguine colour baked into his skin;
His large, long arms, and his unsettled face;
His blood-shot eyes, and lips that seldom close,

GUI. This portrait smacks of treason!

HIL. Our sovereign lord,
The Pontiff, will the homily deliver
In person: I exhort ye, come and hear—
(*aside*) The Pontiff whom I set i' the supreme chair!

[*Exit.*]

GUI. (*to Ebe.*) Marked you his action?

CEN. Like a machinist,
He stalks to hear the creature he hath made.

GUI. And calls us to admire the mockery!
But come, my lord; we know not what may chance
In turbulent times of change.

[*Exeunt GUIDO and EBERARDUS.*]

CEN. Why, that is true;

And gross, rank-rooted schemes may be submerged
Like oozy weeds in Nile's broad overflow,
Whose ebbing waves beckon with glittering joy
Fertility's advance. There's some fresh plot
Gathering in Guido's soul; but good hopes oft
In good mens' hearts will blossom 'midst all ills;
So let the seasons work.

Enter FABIO and TANCREDI.

TAN. I fear we are late.

CEN. (*aside*). Nobles of Guido's party. (*Aloud*). Why
such haste, sirs?

FAB. His holiness e'en now performs high mass
For the young Emperor.

CEN. We are in good time:

If not, our absence will disturb no thought.
So dense the crowd, I doubt if you'd find room
To stick a rapier upright there, unless
You sheathed it in the broad back of some monk.

FAB. A jest that savours of impiety.

TAN. You're pleasant, sir.

CEN. A pleasant scene you've missed.
Erewhile, Count Eberardus, with discourse
Of liliated fragrance, rich in dazzling terms,
Such as an emperor loves, to Guido spake
In raptures of his "poem;" whereupon
Guido's bright eyes, small hawk-nose, and fat chin,
Shone all a-light with pleasure in extreme,
Which suddenly his mounting thoughts inspired
Straightway to catch at interest in the church,
Right through the scattered muses. Soon he cleared
His breast of half its load of Hildebrand;

With eloquent denouncement raising oft
 His heaven-ward hand, to shew his filbert nails
 And topaz rings, but never losing sight
 Of Hildebrand.

FAB. In which keen work you joined ?

CEN. Doubtless I did : you know I hate the man.
 When, all unseen, at height of our discourse——

[*Organ peals within. The strain pauses abruptly.
 Noise, and confused voices.*]

FAB. What may this mean ?

TAN. Hath the church taken fire ?

CEN. I heard the voice of Hildebrand !

[*Increased noise within.*]

*Enter hurriedly, GUIDO, EBERARDUS, BRAZUTE, and
 several Nobles.*

GUI. Shame ! shame !

Oh, frightful violence—profane and brutish—
 It pinnacles all crimes, all thought outshoots,
 Touching God's footstool with a sharp assault !

FAB. }
 TAN. } What is 't ?—what is 't ?

CEN. Nay, gentlemen ; explain !

GUI. Who shall set forth the deed ;
 Who give a shaping language to its bulk !
 Far as mere words can tell—stay, give me breath !—
 To the hushed multitude, Pope Alexander
 Discoursing solemnly, and pouring forth
 Paternal hopes, yet duteous love, for Henry,
 Avowed he would not hold pontifical power,
 Save with full sanction from the Emperor's throne.
 From his high place the holy man came down,

But while descending, Hildebrand, with eyes
Like to a demon, met him on the stairs,
And shouting "Dotard!" smote him in the face
With hand as heavy as a lion's paw,
And seemed prepared to rend him!

All. Monstrous deed!

[Increased noise and confusion within.]

*Enter hurriedly, a crowd of Nobles, Cardinals, Bishops,
and Monks; followed by HILDEBRAND, with out-
spread arms.*

HIL. Form no decision; hear me first I say!
Form no decision; fie on irrational tongues,
And hasty judgments; noise and blind reproof!
Are ye a deafening land-storm wildly raging,
And would ye tear the sheltering forest down?
Trust not yourselves upon a barren heath;
Trust not the Emperor's frail and worldly strength;
Look to the See of Rome! but look ye well
That giant-power be emblemed by a giant,
Not by a yeanning lamb. Oh, sons of Rome—
Nobles and dignitaries of the church—
Pardon me! pardon me a fatal act—
I mean the ignorance of erring choice—
I mean the choice of weakness 'stead of strength—
I mean the installation of Pope Alexander.
Lo! he hath perilled all your rights and power;
Your fortunes, and the purity of your faith;
The very stature of the pontifical office.
Behold, the corner stone o' the Vatican
Trembled! I rushed to save it from the crash,
And in the doing did forget myself

In acting for the safety of us all.
Pope Alexander I pronounce a worm !
Ye must not let him teach us how to crawl
Before an emperor's footstool : rather say
He shall be cast down from the Pontiff's seat,
Whereon my ignorance besought ye place him !

[Murmurs of dissatisfaction, and applause.]

BRAZ. It shall be done !

TAN. Who tells thee so, lord Cardinal ?

1st CAR. My lord Archdeacon speaks with reason.

CEN. With reason !

GUI. No ; with madness ! with ambition !

HIL. Shall I set *you* in his place ?

2nd CAR. The Pope's vicegerency is given by God.

FAB. Hear my lord Cardinal !

2nd CAR. 'T is our great law !

1st CAR. Let 's to the Council !

Voices. To the Council !

HIL. Oh, most humbly—to the council !

GUI. Proud Abbot of St. Paul, and Rome's Arch-
deacon,

Have a care !

HIL. To the Council, my Lord Archbishop !
I will have care, and you shall thank me for it :
Most humbly—to the Council—to the Council !

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*Grand Front of St. John Lateran.*

Enter the COUNTESS MATILDA and GODFREY.

GODF. His mine is sprung, and into pestilent air
He has blown himself.

MAT. We must be calm, and wait.

GODF. Calm! is it possible?

MAT. 'T is only just.

GODF. Seest not thine error yet?—seest not, Matilda,
This object whom thou 'st long beheld with thoughts
Devout, that mingled in thine orisons,
Is fraught with worldliness; one who, beneath
The shaded haunts of sanctity, conceals
Passions like dragons, violent and foul.

MAT. He has, indeed,
Such strength of passion as assorts with greatness
Of thought and action; yet, my lord, believe,
Though he may err, as in this act he has,
In Hildebrand is nothing base or mean.
And let me tell thee, husband, I believe
There may be reason, when we shall know all,
In that which seemed so mad.

GODF. Matilda, cease!
Infatuated woman! cast away.
The film that, like a cowl, doth blind thine eyes:
Dismiss this vicious abbot from thy prayers;
Confess not to him: of thy love I ask it;—
Nay, of thy holiest faith. Oh, wouldst thou gaze
At heaven's clear sapphire through the gates of hell?

MAT. My lord! forbear these impious——

GODF. Forbear thou!

I will not listen to this vain defence

Of such a criminal.

[*Exit* GODFREY.

MAT. This headstrong hate

I fear will snap all ties.

Enter HILDEBRAND.

What hast thou done?

HIL. Well; very well.

MAT. Resolve me of all doubt!

HIL. 'T was impulse from on high, not my design.

Daughter, they rolled before me like a sea;

Then paused to let me walk upon their necks,

As foamy as they were,—I was upheld

By the deputed fire that wings my soul.

The council has concluded as I wished;

And thus the mutinous churchmen are put down.

I left them when I saw 't was working right;

For I can stand alone, therefore have friends.

MAT. Why didst thou smite the Pontiff—Oh, why
didst?

HIL. Because his weak-souled loyalty to Henry

Smote like an axe against the See of Rome.

I heard Time's echoes through the world's forest ringing;

I saw the tree which should o'ertop them all,

Like to a sun-beam falling into night,

And therefore stood I forth and smote that man,

As I will take the axe from out his hand.

MAT. Father, enough: I do believe thy truth
Equals thy courage in this lofty cause.

I much lament thou hast an enemy

In Godfrey, who proclaims thee full of evil,
And worldliness and vice.

HIL. His proclamation
Is as a plague-wind howling through a hall,
Throng'd with grey statues of the elder gods.
Its breath can never taint me : let it proclaim !
There is no vice can dwell in a soul of power :
It may appear in transitory fits ;
But, like blear lightning at the pitch of noon,
It leaves no flaw in heaven. Poisonous dew
Are presently o'ermastered by the sun,
Which sucks them up, but of their influence
Partaking nought, absorbs and turns to good.

MAT. Most gladly, most devoutly do I hear thee ;
And do again surrender my whole soul
To thy paternal charge.

HIL. Daughter, 't is well.
High thrones have need of thee ; and most of all,
Pontifical Rome, in dire emergency,
Looks for thine utmost aid.

MAT. It shall be given :—
But what the threatened peril ?

HIL. Loss of power ;
And that comprises every loss : drain ocean
Of her world-swinging waves, then may her bed
Serve to herd cattle in, safe from all storms,
And browsing fat amid the fossil shapes.
Shall low desires of animal life possess
Our measureless realm, stupendous e'en in death,
And our lost glories give them food and shade !
Oh, daughter ! it is granted thee of heaven
This peril to avert. The Tuscan army,

Obedient to thy call, must hither speed ;
And secretly arriving in the night,
Soon as the Emperor hath departed hence,
May enter suddenly the gates of Rome
To act as I direct.

MAT. What then ?

Oh, father ! let no blood be spilt in this.

HIL. None need, nor shall, unless of those who're mad,
And run upon the spears.

MAL. I am content.

HIL. All the strong posts in Rome I'd have thee guard ;
And to what end I will in brief explain. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter GODFREY and GUIDO.

GODF. Have I not cause, my lord ?

GUI. You have—you have !

My lord duke, listen to me : 't is the ethereal—
The ethereal you should study.

GODF. School you a heart
Amid its anguish with a churchman's dreams !
Know'st thou my soul ? what think'st thou of its thrall ?

GUI. Thy noble lady's loyalty to thee
Sinks all absorbed in his insidious wiles.

GODF. Her loyalty and love—all thoughts and hopes !
Oh, my lord archbishop, into thine ear
I fain would pour my double source of grief ;
For while Matilda on the ghostly breast—
The devilish breast—of Hildebrand reclines,
And follows all the counsels he instils,
The Emperor lingers ever in her path,
And feeds upon her beauty with his eyes.—
Hast not observed it ?

GUI. Never. But, if true,
Wer't not a means—a fortunate means—to turn
The Emperor 'gainst this abbot, whom we hate?

GODF. Call you it fortunate? Is there no word
That to the mind shall paint a hideous thought
Blacker than blackness;—no revolting act
That, o'the instant it first stings the brain,
Shall brand the forehead? If that such there be,
Or word or act, call it a fortunate means
For sure perdition of high manhood here,
With flames hereafter. Shame on thee, my lord!
Thy sacred robes change colour as I gaze,
And startle apprehension! I had hoped
Far different consolation and advice:
But I will fly the hated city walls,
And trust the day not distant when I'll find
A means which honour's hand shall proudly own,
And vengeance feel complete! [Exit.

GUI. Vengeance on whom?
The Emperor, or that abbot?—not on me.
So angry! I was unguarded—perhaps even wrong.
Hildebrand moves Matilda to this pass—
Whether she know it or not, I see 't is done—
That Godfrey, jealous of the Emperor's sighs,
May take no part with him. I do dissect
This truth like a burnt ortolan.

Enter the EMPEROR, with EBERARDUS, and suite.

Pure breezes
And temperate suns attend your majesty,
Unto the foot-stool o' the Germanic throne!
Do you set out to day?

EMP. My lord, we do.

EBE. But of this headstrong Abbot Hildebrand,—

EMP. Now spare us, sir! no more of Hildebrand:
We shall erewhile appoint another Pontiff
In Alexander's place; one who shall keep
All froward churchmen in becoming check.

GUL. Therein your majesty will render service
Of deepest import to the peace of Rome.

EMP. (*to Ebe.*) Your ear, sir!

My message to the Countess of Tuscany—

EBE. Was duly given.

EMP. (*aside*). Where'er I walk my spirit is possessed
With ravishing desire, which ever sees
Matilda's near, yet still receding form.
Her large clear eyes are full of azure light;
Her breath of balmy prayer; and her tall shape,
Is by its beauty softened like a dream.
How shall I compass so much love and dread?
The angel and the woman hold my will
Balanced with fear of heaven. Hist! she comes.

Enter MATILDA, attended.

EMP. Ah! noble princess, rich in southern skies,
And teeming fields, more rich in subject hearts,
Accept our farewell homage, and permit
A hope to beam that not all unregretted,
Nor soon forgotten, shall we hence depart.

MAT. The Majesty of Germany doth bear
His own beams round about his brows, nor needs
To ask for aught to light his hopes.

EMP. Is't so?

Now could I cast my throne into the sea,

And plant my sceptre in the quiet soil,
To stand amidst the vivid summer buds!
Why must I journey hence?

MAT. Oh, royal sir!

Duty, imperious as the sway you bear,
Calls from your realms.

EMP. Yet do you see me, lady,
Like to a magic arrow from the clouds,
Fixed trembling here.

GVI. (*aside*). Bright, sensitive,—and pointed.

MAT. What should we say,
If that the sun enamoured of the stars,
Unto night's palace did all day resort;
His radiant diadem in shades absorbed;
And while he slept with sphered music tranced,
His mortal creatures languished in the dark,
And maddened at the apparent end of time?
Oh, royal sir, the hour of dawn glides by,
While thou, but on the threshold of intent,
Stand'st shining at the gates. God speed you, sir!

EMP. I cannot, will not hence depart, until
Thy promise I obtain. The German court
Shall wait thy presence ere one festive day
Our advent clarion. Thou wilt visit us!

GVI. (*aside*). Godfrey hath reason for his jealous fear;
And yet I doubt the event.

MAT. Imperial Henry!
Myself, and Godfrey will attend your pleasure.

GVI. (*aside*). Godfrey's misled: there's nought to
fear in this.

EMP. Thyself; none else can live within my thoughts.

MAT. Ah, speak not thus: in Rome are many things
That claim devout and deepest thought.

EMP. What mean you?

MAT. I mean the safety of the See of Rome,
Its faith, and those who represent its power:
Oh, fill thy thoughts with visions such as these!
And in especial would I name to thee,
As one deserving reverent confidence,
The learned Abbot Hildebrand.

GUI. Ahem!

EMP. Whom say'st thou?

Oh, I have heard and know enough of him:
We'll bear him well in mind—the learned monk.—
When shall our court behold thee, and be blest?

MAT. As thou dost hold the grace of highest heaven,
And of the church, my prayers shall follow thee:
And to thy court some brief space will I come,
As I shall find thine ardent soul waft back
The measure of its faith towards templed Rome.

EMP. Now, by my sword and its high warlike hopes,
All faith, all feeling shall return to thee!
Such be our bond: Matilda, fare thee well!

[*Exeunt* EMPEROR, EBERARDUS, GUIDO, and suite.

MAT. He darkened o'er the name of Hildebrand.—
Whate'er his bent, I will at once secure
The safety of the papal power, and plant
The Tuscan troops where they may best defend
Our purpose; then, if vast designs take root,
Build up a throne upon the thrones of kings. [Exit.

SCENE III.—*A Cell in the Monastery of St. Paul.**Table and lamp, with skull and crucifix.**Enter HILDEBRAND.*

HIL. Portentous changes wrestle in the air !
I see, methinks, a mighty shadow fall,
While solid pillars lift a solid throne,
Which in fixed radiance stands. Strong deeds awake,
And clamouring throng the portals of the hour.
Weak-minded Alexander thou must die !
I placed thee on a tower, and thou didst offer
A king the pass-key to our wall of strength ;
Therefore 't is good thou diest. Plead not, my soul !
The wheels of destiny pass o'er his corse.
There 's much to do. The time for me is ripe :
It was not wise till now that I should take
The sphere which long hath rolled before my grasp,
Swimming and heaving in the ethereal space ;
But, with contentious and eruptive fires,
Threatening precipitate sovereignty. Who 's there ?

Enter DAMIANUS.

(*Aside*). He has been listening at the door—dull fool !

(*Aloud*). There 's much to do.

DAMI. I feel it in the air
With every respiration.

HIL. Why comest here
At such an hour ?

DAMI. Lord Abbot, I would ask
What should be done, touching Pope Alexander ?

HIL. Nothing. He's very safe.

DAMI. Safe in the dark cell where your orders thrust him.

HIL. I know it.

DAMI. But what next, for he is old,
And needeth comfort in imprisonment.

HIL. Do nothing. Leave him.

DAMI. His cell is very damp, and cold dews trickle
Down his grey head and beard, as bowed he sits,
Counting his beads. Beseech you, good lord abbot,
Change his sad dwelling!

HIL. Let him take his shroud,
And finish it i' the antechamber!

DAMI. But, my lord,
How—how shall we answer this?

HIL. Answer it!
Who shall presume to gall and question us?
Who make us constantly responsible—
Who'd force us answer, but this Alexander—
Therefore death's scythe shall give him sweeping thanks.

DAMI. And for his service and his burial——

HIL. Let him have Night and Silence! A century
hence,
When a few dust-filled bones perchance are found,
'Twill shew that somebody died there. For the rest,
I know my 'answer,' let those ask who may:
Mention his name no more, for he has passed!

DAMI. My lord, good night:—a deep good night,
I pray! *[Exeunt, at opposite sides.]*

SCENE IV.—*Front of the Vatican. Castle of St. Angelo in the distance. Sunrise.*

Enter CENTIUS.

CEN. I've seen the sun rise now these thirty years,
And scarcely missed a morning. Ye blest saints!
Low in the grave I'd lay my satisfied head
Could I behold the popular cause advance
With steps as regular and full of light.
On one side Hildebrand seeks to destroy
All liberty of conscience: with like zeal
Our nobles grasp at every rood of earth;
And knowing the rich vein of labour's ore,
Would turn their fellow creatures into coin.
Hence, they hate Hildebrand, who'd act their part,
And wield, besides, high sacerdotal power;
But whether in return, he most doth hate,
Or fear, or scorn, soon must events give proof.

Enter GUIDO, slowly.

Gravely you read the earth, and seem with each step
To turn a fresh page!

GUI. Each far worse than the last—
But the same subject.

CEN. It must be a dark one;
Yet with some fascination?

GUI. It *is* a dark one.
Last night I went forth for a lonely walk,
And paused in front o' the monastery of St. Paul.
I know not why, nor what had led me thither:

I stood among the dark-mossed uncouth trees,
Which rose against the cold and breathless sky
Like sculptured gods of Babylon's early youth;
And thought that one a rugged outline bore,
Like unto Hildebrand—so dense and still.
Sometimes at mass—sometimes alone in the cloisters—
Sometimes i' the street—he stands just in that way.

CEN. But what of this?—why do you look so pale,
And gaze around? what is 't that moves you thus?

GUI. Sudden presentiments that forestall wisdom
With most unreasonable fact.

CEN. My lord!

Sure this is weakness—but your tale's not done?

GUI. It is not.

CEN. Nay, proceed.

GUI. Wild and abrupt

The wind rose, like a dragon lashing about,
And o'er the northern wall, ere I could turn,
A vulture 'gainst the high blast beat its way
With clanging power, and passing o'er my head
Sent forth a cry that pierced into my soul——

Enter FABIO hastily.

What wouldst thou say?

FAB. Pope Alexander's dead!

GUI. See there! see there! I felt it would be so

CEN. How dead—how died he? Answer us at once

FAB. Nay, sir, I do not know.

GUI. He hath been murdered!

In St. Paul's monastery he was held close,
Pending the recent council, and therein
He hath been foully dealt with!

FAB. Foully indeed.

CEN. (*aside*). What follows this?—I will away to
learn. [*Exit.*]

*Enter three Cardinals, followed by several Abbots and
Monks, in alarm.*

GUI. Now, now!

1st CAR. Oh, my lord Guido!

GUI. Is the news true?

1st CAR. We come but now from viewing
His pale remains within the monastery.

GUI. Where, then, is Hildebrand?

1st CAR. He's gone; and no one
Knows whither.

GUI. Gone!—fled?

1st CAR. He must be found anon.

FAB. Saw ye no blood upon the reverend form?

GUI. There's not a moment to waste! Lords, Car-
dinals,

And all you heads and dignitaries of the church,
Full synod let us straight convoke, to search
The hideous truth out; retribution hurl
Upon the soul of guilt; and fix with whom
The future power be vested.

[*Music outside, as of a distant march.*]

FAB. What's that?

GUI. It sounds like a march!

1st CAR. Without delay,

Let's to full conclave at St. John Lateran.

[*March approaching.*]

Enter CENTIUS and TANCREDI, followed by several Monks.

GUI. What is't, my lords?

CEN. You will know soon enough,

GUI. Speak, brothers!

1st MONK. Soldiers, at St. John Lateran,
Have taken up their post, and guard the gates!

[March advances.]

Enter, slowly, an Officer, at the head of troops. They march across, and exit. Enter the COUNTESS MATILDA and CARDINAL BRAZUTE, between two Officers, heading troops, which range themselves in front of the Vatican.

GUI. Daughter of Tuscany!—illustrious lady!
What wouldst thou do?

MAT. Secure the Vatican,
Even as now St. John's gates have been guarded.

GUI. Secure!

MAT. Would ye know more, my lords?
Those troops which have passed on, proceed to occupy
The Castle of St. Angelo on the rock.

GUI. Oh, wherefore this?

MAT. Because the Pontiff's dead.

GUI. We know it, madam, and have convoked a
synod;

But why these troops?

MAT. To Alexander's seat
There must be a successor.

1st CAR. We shall choose one.

MAT. You're spared that trouble; the successor's
chosen.

GUI. Chosen!

[*Distant march. Troops are seen to mount guard
at the Castle of St. Angelo on the rock.*]

Voices. Vivat sanctus Pater Gregorius Septimus!

[*Applause and loud murmurs.*]

BRAZ. Vivat!

Enter HILDEBRAND.

HIL. Peace! Let tumultuous tongues be mute:
I do submit me to the elective voice. [Shouts.]

CEN. (*to Gui.*) He may submit his neck unto the
block

As suddenly, ere long.

GUI. (*aside*). I am all air! [Exeunt.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Apartment in a Palace near Rome.**Enter GODFREY.*

GODF. Are these the men who babble of the spheres,
And while they point to the vast frame of heaven,
Make it the looking-glass of their self-love,
Which virtue stamps to atoms?—which a child,
In the simplicity of strength can search
With the first pebble of its upward thought,
As David brained the giant?—these the men,
Who for our common frailty intercede,
Being themselves all purity and truth!
Oh, counterfeit of goodness! get ye hence,
Lest we the cloven footmarks of your way
Identify, and turn our prayers to whips.
Hildebrand—Gregory—most potent cheat!
Here will I frame my net of iron meshes;
And though it cost me years to compass thee——

[Clarion sounds outside.]

Who comes?

Enter an Attendant.

ATT. Count Eberardus, please you, my lord.

GODF. From Germany direct?

ATT. My lord, I think so.

GODF. Say, I wait his pleasure. *[Exit Attendant.]*
What can portend

This journey and this visit?—not my wife?
Doth, then, the Emperor tire of wanton wars,
And turns he now again his salient bow,
Hot-headed arrows of loose hopes to wing
'Gainst one already in benighted ways,
Lost to all love and truth!

Enter EBERARDUS.

EBE. How fares Duke Godfrey?

GODF. Sir, well enough, I thank you.

EBE. Well enough!

GODF. Will you advise me of your business, sir?
For, to be plain, I do not like your master;
And it may be that I shall like your errand
As little.

EBE. This is strange, sir! How should the Emperor
Give pain to you in sending me to hold
A serious conference with you—or your lady—
If it be that you hint at?

GODF. That I hint at!
Oh, how much more! for 't is impossible
A sober thought should measure his wild will.
Why should this touch me, do you ask, my lord?
And wonder as you ask;—lifting your eyebrows;
Putting one palm forth with a reasoning air
Of mild appeal, your attitude presenting
The most surprised and moderate man in the world?
Sir, it does touch me—nearly. You are a courtier,
And love your master, as all courtiers have done
Since osier crowns were woven in old woods:
But, whatsoe'er your loyalty or skill,
Your mission here I shall turn inside out,

Baring his purpose to contempt, which thus,
With all due ceremony, you shall take back.

EBE. My lord, I've borne your temper patiently,
But you rush through all bounds; and much I fear
Your high nobility you set at stake,
In losing courtliness. What mission, think you,—
What purpose brings me hither?

GODF. Purest virtue.

Know you the Emperor hath seen Matilda?
Hath spoken with her, also? You forget it?
Perhaps, you never knew it? Hast not heard
That the damned Gregory hath ratified
Matilda's separation?

EBE. You are too hasty, sir;
Blind jealousy misleads you. I am sped
Towards Rome; and pause to tell you that I bear
Dispatches from the Emperor touching Gregory.

GODF. Gregory?

EBE. Ay, Hildebrand: call him as ye may.

GODF. Gregory! To what purport? to invest him
With further territories; to assist
With armies and with money; to exhort
All Italy to worship?—

EBE. To depose him!

GODF. Him! Gregory! Depose Gregory, do you say?

EBE. I do.

GODF. Imperial Henry hath a noble spirit.—
Why, this is news!—And, courteous lord, forgive
My ill reception of you; well you know
That I have cause for much disquietude.—
But how is this, and when shall it be done?

EBE. Forthwith.

GODF. How? When?

EBE. My lord, the occasion
Is fixed, albeit the Emperor doth command
My secrecy therein.

GODF. Well, sir; 't is well.
I will accompany you, and lend all aid
Within my scope to render his disgrace
A terror and a warning.

EBE. Sir, I thank you:
And 't was the Emperor's wish you should be there.

GODF. My wish, no less. Now, Gregory! thy power
Rocks to its base, and it shall strew the plain
In fragments ghastly as a murderer's dreams.
O, sir! you chase the shadows from my soul—
You light my path with fire! Let us away! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Palace of the COUNTESS MATILDA, in
Rome.*

Enter MATILDA, with a letter.

MAT. The Emperor's mother favouring Gregory,
Is a brave sound to go forth to the world.
The Dowager Empress, then, hath deeply felt
My late appeal. (*Reads.*)
"I shall attend your summons instantly;
And doubt not I may reach you ere my letter."
What if she change her mind?—it's possible.
I shall not change—rather increase my efforts.
Devotion, doubled now, claims acts with thoughts,
For I am all involved. What hurrying step—

Enter the EMPRESS AGNES.

The Dowager Empress ! Madam, my arms rejoice
To hold you thus ! but wherefore this disguise ?

AGN. In haste I left the imperial court, much fearing
Detention through delay : e'en while I speak,
Count Eberardus may have entered Rome,
To publish the decree.

MAT. He dare not do it.

AGN. Oh, I had hoped young Henry had not dared.
Bethink you, madam, how 't must wring my heart,
To find myself the opponent of my son !

MAT. I have thought of it ; and do honour you,
Imperial lady, for your constancy
Unto the Vatican. The struggle 's hard ;
But therein do you shew yourself more strong,
Pure, and devout : and, truly, is it not
Most wise maternity to check a son
Who rushes towards a pitfall ?—pray you speak !

AGN. It is my best belief, my strong support.

MAT. 'T was rumoured here that, flushed with wine,
he claimed
To nominate the hierarchy of Rome !
The which when Gregory heard, he straightway wrote,
And bade the Emperor think no more of it.
Now comes this Eberardus to reply,
The Emperor doth depose his Holiness,
Wishing a more obsequious church !

AGN. Oh, madam !
This is, indeed, too true ; and I do feel
That, by a hand of power——

MAT. Should be withdrawn
His sceptre—for a time ?

AGN. Should this be done? O, God!

MAT. It should—it must!

Call you to mind his inexperience—

His dangerous passions; and at once resolve
To save him by a well-timed, strong reproof!

AGN. I am resolved.

MAT. The Saints speak in you, madam!

Submission must be taught him—how to stoop,
And bow to the triple-crown of the Vatican. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Corridor in the Tower of CENTIUS in Rome. Folding doors at the back. Knocking outside.*

Enter CENTIUS, closing the doors behind him.

CEN. Open the gates whoe'er the man may be.
Nay—stop! Since that I have a place of strength,
It were as well to choose my visitors.

Enter an Attendant.

ATT. This ring, my lord.

CEN. Admit the applicant. [*Exit Attendant.*]

'T is Godfrey!—sure this bodes us something good:
A strong ally.

Enter GODFREY.

My lord, you're welcome here.

GODF. Thanks, noble Centius: come I not in time?

CEN. You find the city in some trouble, sir.

(*Aside.*) In time!— [*Looking towards the folding doors.*]

GODF. With greater troubles pending.

CEN. Do you think so?

GODF. I do, and think they may be forthright
ended

By one sure blow.

CEN. Ah! I would gladly see it!

GODF. And aid it, wouldst not?

CEN. With my soul I would.

GODF. And I with my sword!—Curses on Gregory!

CEN. I say so too.

GODF. And on the Emperor.

CEN. Of that hereafter; but the matter in hand
Is Gregory's deposition. I perceive
You know of this.

GODF. And therefore came I here.

CEN. We'll set our shoulders to his downward
wheel!

His fall is compassed—and, to make it sure,
I have some friends here, you shall look upon.

[CENTIUS *opens the folding doors.*

Enter GUIDO, FABIO, and TANCREDI.

GODF. I do rejoice to meet such friends, and feel
The strength of a united purpose. Centius!
My life for Gregory's death!

CEN. His death, my lord?
His deposition and discomfiture,
Perchance his banishment—that did we wish;—
But for his death?

GUI. It were the safest measure.

CEN. Do you advise it?

GUI. Albeit, I would not
That ye should kill him.

FAB. 'T were a dangerous task.

CEN. And difficult withal.

GODF. Not dangerous, nor difficult! mark me well:
I have forecast the means.

CEN. So prompt—proceed, sir.

GODF. (*laying his hand on his breast*). I will not
speak to ye of my wounds here,
And why I seek his life.

GVI. Oh, you have cause,
Most bitter cause, my lord.

GODF. This I'll pass over.
At the Grand Conclave, when in pontifical state,
Uttering his brazen flats, Gregory sits,
My emissary shall forthwith appear
And lure him to our grasp: then while he sits
On his coiled chains with clenched teeth, Eberardus
With safety may proclaim his deposition.
Thus will the fresh-pierced veins of his disgrace
Give colour to his sudden taking off,
(*aside to Cen.*) And seem the Emperor's will.

CEN. Nay, but that's good.

GVI. (*aside*). Would it were done! I see him
manacled!

I see him dungeoned, while the inward throes
Draw square his nether jaw, and his fierce thoughts
Shake his large shadow on the lamp-lit wall!
(*Aloud*). But how effected—if it needs must be?

CEN. My lords, we are too hasty: first secure
And bring him hither—then decide his fate.

TAN. Ay, that's the best, and now the means—the
means?

GODF. He must be bidden to a lonely palace,

By urgent message of some embassy
From foreign powers on secret policies.

CEN. He will not go: he will command them straight
Into his presence.

FAB. What if your noble lady
Were feigned to send?

GODF. My lord!—We *met* as friends.
Were he worse devil, and worse enemy,
And that I hated him a thousand fold,
I would not—pardon me—we're wasting time—
Say, shall we tell him that some dying noble,
Some aged prince, craves help and consolation
In his last moments from the Pontiff's presence?

GUI. And add, be sure, this aged prince bequeaths
Unto the pastoral care of Gregory,
His sunny lands with all the flocks upon them;
Else, he'll not move.

CEN. Lord Guido's dulcimer,
Methinks will charm the shepherd from his fold.

GUI. Ay, ay; ye'll find I read him very close:
The man is not profound. His present power
Grew from no real orthodox eloquence:
He owes it all to his Memnonian voice!
He has no genius.

CEN. But he has strong friends.

GUI. Alas! that's true.

GODF. And enemies.

GUI. Still, 't is true:
And most of all I fear the Greek-god head,
And stony eye of Cardinal Brazute.
Howbeit the cunning toils are most my trust,
Framed out of hearing.

CEN. (*deliberating*). 'T is a feasible scheme—
The sunny lands and flocks—it may be done.

GODF. I'll answer for the rest: lands he shall have—
The widest—those that stretch beyond the grave—
And, be the records of his crimes, his flocks,
While wolves in darkness howl his monody! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Grand Conclave, lighted with splendour.*

GREGORY, *seated as Pontiff, surrounded by Ambassadors, Cardinals, Nobles, the EMPRESS AGNES, the COUNTESS MATILDA, BRAZUTE, DAMIANUS, &c.*

GRE. I claim the empire of the West: and, claiming,
The cities and the people bow assent.
Into the bosom of light, as to its source,
Were nations conscious of their best behoof—
Would all authority be gladly poured;
But since mankind do need a helping hand,
It is the province of paternal sway
To lift them from blind earth, and place with care
I' the sanctuary of peace. We live in a time
When lion-mouthed war with brutalised force prevails,
And monarchs bathe in most abhorrent glory:
The which, not sanctioning—but from my soul
Loathed as man's self-made pestilence—I denounce.
Take up the world in your hand, and look at it!
You see on one side sworded kings—on the other,
Our lofty ordinances! Here are two powers:
Christ's mission, and man's sword—ye are to choose.
Clear are my words, and palpable to sense
As yon high crucifix! Wherefore, 'tis good,

Most just, and dutiful, ourselves to range
'Neath heaven's white banner, and take special charge
Of all that lives and moves. It is not much—
My children—'tis not much. What embassies
Are here assembled?

Amb. of FRANCE (*rising*). On the part of France
In your Supremacy's presence I appear
To offer reverence and gratulation,
From our loved king, who, in his people's name,
Vouches all fealty and devout regard.

GRE. 'Tis well: bid him remember!

Amb. of VENICE (*rising*). From the Doge
Of Venice, may it please your Holiness,
I bring most humble tribute of all duty,
And deep assurances of stedfast love.

GRE. Bid thou the Doge thy master to repent
His manifold vices, lest we turn our back,
And darken supplication. I am advised
That Geisa, King of Hungary, and the Princes
Of Capua and Beneventum, swear
All fealty.

Enter an Officer.

OFF. Craving audience straight,
Lanfranc from England, greets your Eminence.

GRE. (*after a pause*). Admit him! [*Exit Officer.*
(*Aside*). He hath pitched his tone full high.

Enter LANFRANC.

LANF. William of England, surnamed the Conqueror,
Sends friendly greetings towards the Vatican;

Offering his duty to the Roman See,
And unto Gregory his mailed hand.

GRE. (*to Mat.*) This Norman woodcutter must be
endured;

He may be over-strong for our reproof.

(*Aloud*). We take his hand; and herewith ratify
His royal claim unto the throne he holds.

Enter an Officer.

Speak! (*after a pause*). Why, speak!

OFF. Your—from Germany—supreme——

GRE. Who comes from Germany?

OFF. Count Eberardus.

GRE. Well, on what?—take *that* trembler from
our presence,

And send the other in. [*Exit Officer, accompanied.*]

MAT. (*aside to Agnes*). Madam, be firm!

*Enter EBERARDUS. He advances to the centre. Enter
GODFREY, CENTIUS, and GUIDO; who stand aside.*

GRE. Big with what errand come you, sir, to Rome
Thus suddenly; and, lacking reverence,
Usher yourself, all unapprised, before us?
I trust your royal master doth preserve
His soul's health with his body's?

EBE. Hildebrand!

[*Loud murmur, ending abruptly in silence.*]

GODF. (*aside*). Oh, this is premature! Would he
had waited!

EBE. Thus in full conclave am I bade to speak,
By our imperial sovereign, Henry!

GRE. Speak, then, for your sovereign.

EBE. Hildebrand!

Self-styled and self-created Roman Pontiff,
With titles, revenues, authorities,
As Gregory the Seventh—down from thy chair
Descend! Put off thy triple crown! and know,
Imperial Henry sanction doth refuse
To thy election, and deposes thee!

[*The whole Assembly rise.*

BRAZ. (*calmly*). Shall the rocks fear the shipwreck?

A CAR. Strike him down,

Low on his knees!

Voices Down! down!

[*Cardinals and Nobles rush towards EBERARDUS.*

GREGORY descends, and interposes.

GRE. Forbear! stand back! A more becoming answer
Should Gregory make.

(*To Agnes*). Madam, do you know this gentleman?

AGN. (*with scorn*). I do: he is the valet of my son.

EBE. The Empress Dowager!

[GREGORY resumes his throne.

AGN. Ay, sir; and hither

I came to raise my voice against the crime
Of my son's impious message to the Pontiff.

EBE. Could it be thought!

GRE. (*solemnly*). Return to Germany!
And bear my mandate to the Emperor,
That he should straightway from his throne descend;
Put off his crown, and fill it full of dust,
Which sprinkling on his head, let him repeat
His words to me, applying them to himself.
Clad in the garment of supernal wrath,

An impious creature visiting, I take
Health from his body ; from his limbs and thews,
The life elastic ; with his fluent blood
A sluggish vapour mingle ; and i' the face
Of the last frantic hope that rushes out
From the fierce-flaming prison of his soul,
The gates of Mercy close in thunder !

[*Rises with extended arms thrown forward.*

Behold !

He is deposed, and excommunicated !

Voices. Away !

[*EBERARDUS is hurried out.*

CEN. (*to Godf.*) Must it end thus ! What's to be done ?

GODF. (*to Cen.*) 'S death ! but 't is plain, despite all
secrecy,

That Gregory was prepared.

CEN. (*to Godf.*) Then we are foiled !

GODF. (*to Cen.*) Not foiled !—it shall not be !—my
plan still holds,

And tenfold reason for its execution.

See ! 't is my emissary !

GRE. Dismiss the Conclave !

[*Descends from his throne. Exeunt Nobles,
Cardinals, AGNES, MATILDA, &c.*

Enter a Major-Domo, meeting GREGORY.

M.-Do. With profound reverence I approach the feet
Of Sanctity, and present my master's duty ! [*Kneels.*

GRE. Well ?—

Who is he ?

M.-Do. The aged Prince of Beneventum.

GRE. Well ?

M.-Do. He has but now arrived in Rome, and lies
On his death-bed.

GRE. And what is this to me?
Can I give him back his youth?—can I stop him,
Does he think?

M.-Do. He would unburden, ere he passes,
His soul of all its loads; and thereunto
His vast possessions add most grievous weight,
Not knowing how he should bestow them best—
But seeking your advice.

GRE. Oh!—he shall have it.

M.-Do. Beseech your Sovereign Holiness lose no time!

GRE. Lead me to where he lies.

[*Exeunt GREGORY and the Major-Domo.*]

GUI. Said I not well?

All merciful Heaven, thy servant's thanks receive!

GODF. Stalk to thy dungeon!

GUI. Hist! hist!

CEN. Follow now!

[*Exeunt cautiously after GREGORY.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A spacious Apartment in an ancient Palace.*

The pretended Prince of Beneventum is discovered at the further end, upon a Couch, enveloped in an embroidered coverlid.

Enter GREGORY, with the Major-Domo.

GRE. He hath not dwelt within this palace long?

M.-Do. But a few days, so please your Holiness.

GRE. And came he hither sick?

M.-Do. Great sir! he did.

GRE. (*abstractedly*). It was a noble edifice,—but me-
thinks

An air of strangeness now pervades the walls;
A silent, yet a busy brooding air,
As of a spirit clinging to its clay,
Which rots e'en while 'tis grasped. Let all things rot
When they have stood their time!—thus power and fame,
Possessions manifold and large respect,
With wise corruption are made ripe to fall
Into progressive reproducing hands.
Yonder he lies!—Think you his death-hour near?

M.-Do. We think it is, dread sir! he cannot sleep,
But hath deep trances.

GRE. So: announce me to him.

[*The Major-Domo moves towards the Couch.*

M.-Do. His Holiness approaches, honoured Prince.

PRIN. (*faintly*). I thank his gracious kindness. Leave
the chamber. [*Exit Major-Domo.*]

GRE. (*aside*). How changed his voice since last I
heard him speak!

(*Advancing a few paces*). How farest good Prince?—Hath
age with moss and weed

O'ergrown the movements of life's radiant wheel;

Or doth moist sickness prematurely sap

Thy grey tower's dignity?

PRIN. (*feebly*). Come near my couch.

GRE. (*advancing after a pause*). Into the terrors
of a future state,

What mortal step can take us all alone!

The dragons of our past life foam behind—

Demon-lined avenues interminable,

Stretch far away before the dying soul!

Therefore——

PRIN. Therefore, we must solicit aid,
From all that can bestow it.

GRE. Thou say'st well.

PRIN. I hold possessions——

GRE. (*advancing*). Not to hold them long!

PRIN. Not long—ah! no—my golden ocean ebbs,
E'en with this little inland rill of blood.

GRE. Hast thou done good with all this wealth
through life?

PRIN. I have not. To be brief—for I do feel
This must be ended presently—I bequeath
All my fair lands unto thy pastoral charge,
That so their distribution may assist
Man's welfare, and my peace within the tomb.

GRE. Thy countenance in death shall be all light!

White-robed and sceptred, on thy brow I fix
A heavenly star!

PRIN. (*feebly*). That is a glittering gift :
My gift, though of the earth, doth lack not brightness.

GRE. Where is the deed of this so bright bequest?

PRIN. (*fiercely*). Here!

[GODFREY thrusts out his mailed arm from
beneath the coverlid ; then rises.

Enter FABIO and TANCREDI, armed.

GODF. Utter a word—and thou diest instantly!

FAB. Thou ow'st allegiance to the Emperor!

TAN. And hast defied him.

GODF. Cease my lords, I pray!

It is a time for deeds. (*To Gre.*) Ay, brilliant deeds!

Behold me ready to command a force

That shall oppose your blind and misled troops,

And foot them into dust—using your name!

TAN. (*loudly*). Count Centius!

[CENTIUS appears at an opposite door.

GODF. To your safe charge we commit
A tyrant—he is mortal!

CEN. Pass this way!

[*Exeunt.*

- SCENE II.—*Gardens of a Villa in Tivoli.*

Enter EBERARDUS and a German Officer.

EBE. Why hath the Emperor followed me :—why thus
Peril his person?

OFF. Sir, 't was his intent

To burst all unannounced, as from the sky,
And glare through Rome, striking a final blow
On Gregory's fall.

EBE. Who still reigns paramount,
And hurls destruction on the Emperor's head!
Say you our royal master is apprised
Of how the event hath turned?

OFFI. The news outsped
The proof, as doth a screaming cormorant
The coming storm.

EBE. Oh, Majesty! how sad
And hollow is thy earth; for while, above,
A chorus rings thy praises in the clouds,
Echoes, beneath thy very throne, the truth
With melancholy modulations breathe;
Near and remote, as is the voice of death.

OFFI. My lord—the Emperor!

EBE. How shall I meet his passion?

Enter the EMPEROR, wildly.

EMP. Deposed! deposed!—and excommunicate!
Monstrous and mad audacity! This Gregory!
This whirlpool-seated spawn! this offal-god
For idiot fish to stare at all agape!
This horned king o' the cloven herd of Rome!
How dares he thus to jest with our decree,
And feign this big retort! Is it not feigned?
Is it not mere inflation of his state?
Knows he our heel can stamp him flat as coin?
Or *can* it be that he——O, Eberardus!
Tell—tell me all thy mind; what doth he mean?

EBE. My liege, I crave your pardon, 't is too true.

EMP. True! true! dost think he will resist me then,
And to resistance add supremacy,
Deposing me instead?

EBE. Your Majesty
Can never be deposed from hearts that love you.

EMP. That love me!—be deposed! Thou poisonous
madman!

Thy dreams are plagues! I see—I see thou think'st it!
But what of that—what if all Germany think so?
Their thinking shall not make it come to pass:
Still shall my subjects know me for their king.

Enter an Attendant with a scroll.

What's this? a list of all the nobles' names:
All who besought to attend me hither!—what!
Withdrawing—yes, withdrawing fealty—
Their sworn allegiance to the Imperial throne!

EBE. Great sir! I do beseech you not to lose
All fortitude in this extremity!

EMP. Confederate princes! Oh, confederate devils!
I will but lose myself in extreme hate
At such desertion. Never more shall day
Afford them ease or pastime; every night
I'll stuff with vague and multiplying fears;
And when their turrets flame above their heads,
And split like glass, through the red smoke my voice,
Following the trumpet's all remorseless blast,
Shall taunt their very ashes!

EBE. Pray you, my liege!

EMP. What ho!—it shall be done!
This instant shall my couriers mount and away!
With orders to my army, which ere now

Hath reached the frontiers. Where are my guards?
What ho!—no answer!—ho! within, I say!
All silent? palsied!—are *they* anathematised?
A few hours since, and lackies to my nod,
Were plenteous as the gnats around a bough,
Swayed by a summer breeze!

Enter an Officer, slowly.

You come with speed, sir!
Your loyalty finds wings to take our orders!

OFF. I rather come to bring intelligence
To your late Majesty.

EMP. Late!

OFF. Of your late army.

EMP. Late army!—Majesty!

OFF. Its leaders, sir,
Advanced beyond the frontiers, have declared
The throne is vacant.

EMP. Oh! [*Sinks on a couch.*]

EBE. Do—do they say this?

OFF. You'll find they do, sir, if you take horse
and meet them. [*Exit.*]

EMP. Confederate nobles—army—all desert
An excommunicated king! King! I am none!
Crown—sceptre—sacred head—all sink i' the dust
When swords turn traitors. Knew'st thou of this before?

EBE. I did in part, my liege, anticipate
Some wide disaster from the anathemas
Pronounced against you. Much I feared the army,
Soon as the princes and chief captains heard
You had arrayed yourself against the church—

EMP. (*rising*). How have I done so?

EBE. By opposing Gregory,
Whom all Rome's sanctity elects and favours.

EMP. Curses ! Oh, tenfold curses light upon him,
And those who love him !—What—what can be done ?

EBE. By violence nought, my liege ; or worse. But
reason

Would counsel to conciliate, not provoke.
I pray your Majesty set out forthwith
For Rome.

EMP. For Rome ! and lay myself along
The Vatican steps, to soften the ascent
Of arrogant Gregory ?

EBE. My liege, consider.

EMP. Consider dost thou say—consider what ?
Oh, I can read thy face ; thine altered face !
The lines and shades equivocate, and tell
Of truths that blink on seeing first the light :
A novel charge ; a doubt is written on it,
In the blank space of gone security.
Yet speak—yet give the words—consider what ?

EBE. That thou art——

EMP. Throneless, and bereft of power !
But I have soldiers still, who may be true.

EBE. Pardon me, sire ; there's something left untold,
Full well I know that Gregory now is leagued
With Duke Rhodolpho of Suabia,
'Gainst whom your armies will no longer strive.
Moreover, 't is believed that while he seeks
The Normans for allies, by secret means,
Shaming his sacred office, he has urged
The Saxons to revolt. Return you cannot :
By countless spies we're watched.

EMP. Take you this sword!
I know the use of't, and on human grounds
Would never blench at any mortal foe;
But heaven, or hell, or both alternately,
Will have me prostrate. I will go to Rome,
Or anywhere you wish—I ask not why—
But I do think I never shall return! [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—*Apartment in the Palace of MATILDA,
in Rome.*

Enter MATILDA, and AGNES.

AGN. Is it his custom to absent himself,
And pass long hours in solitary prayer?

MAT. At times, he does so.

AGN. In some oratory;
Some private chapel, or deep-foliaged grove,
He poureth out his soul?

MAT. I have heard him, often.

AGN. Heard him?

MAT. No, madam! you mistake my words—
I have heard that Gregory doth this frequently.
'Tis commonly known—or said.

AGN. Then 't is most certain
Deep meditation holds him from our sight?

MAT. Oh, madam! to speak truly, I am, indeed,
Most sick at soul, for much I fear his absence
Is fraught with peril. Where he is, I know not!

AGN. How's this? not know!—what peril should
he dread?

Enter GODFREY.

MAT. (*aside*). Godfrey here!
And cased in armour underneath his robe!
Then danger and disaster fill the air.

AGN. Your animosity, my lord, we know:
Your injuries we doubt.

GODF. Doubt you the pain
Of a fond husband whom his wife deserts:
Who separates herself from all his love,
To kneel to a brazen idol, and believe
Its hisses heavenly music?

MAT. Godfrey, forbear!
In mine own right, a princess of fair realms,
I do claim equal right over myself,
Once fair in your regard, and not made foul
By your now jaundiced eyes.

GODF. Have I not cause
For all the jaundice which a pestilent wrong
Can pour into the blood?

AGN. You trample down
All delicacy, my lord, in your fierce speech.

MAT. Why com'st thou, Godfrey, to disturb me thus?

GODF. I answer briefly: give thy signet to me,
In token of command!

MAT. To command whom?

GODF. The Tuscan armies.

MAT. Never, Godfrey! wherefore—
Wherefore dost ask it?

GODF. Gregory's fate is fixed
If you refuse.

MAT. How fixed: where is he, then?

GODF. Locked in a tower : I will not tell thee where.

AGN. (*aside*). Ah ! is it thus ? [*Exit hastily.*]

MAT. What madness burns thy sense ?

And think'st thou, then, by this atrocious threat

To cause me give thee means of execution !

The Tuscan armies are for Gregory !

GODF. (*solemnly*). Oh, wretched woman ! once of soul
so bright,

So holy, pure, and full of all sweet gifts,

That the corruption of the entire gross world

Changed not thine earthliest thought into itself,

But rather didst thou make an atmosphere

To freshen mortal nature, and make clear

The opening heavens, ascending higher and higher !

Oh, wretched woman ! now behold thy state—

Polluted fanatic, lost to all shame !

MAT. (*aside, in agony*). His words sink down upon
my brain like lead !

(*Aloud*). Godfrey, no more !—cease these insulting taunts.

GODF. More thou must hear !—why hast thou sepa-
rated

Thyself from me ; why hath this Gregory

That separation ratified ;—why didst thou

Allure the Emperor's love ?

MAT. 'T is false !

GODF. (*seizing her arm.*) 'T is true !—thou didst it to
obtain his power

For Gregory's use ; and, failing, didst intrigue

To bring his Empress mother into Rome,

Enlarging thus the wing of the arch-fiend !

This is not all—s' death ! thou shalt hear the rest :

Why hast thou, in thy palace-hall, reared up

A winding stair that reaches to the roof?

Why, but for prompt communication

By secret galleries, with the Vatican !

MAT. Godfrey ! thy curses—these opprobrious words

And vicious thoughts, keep for thy proper use :

To me they not apply, nor will I bear them !

Go, sir ! and do your worst !

GODF. (*abstractedly, after a pause*).

What is our life ?——

Oh, Innocence ! white-bosomed purity !

Sweet essence of the heart, and its best hopes ;

Whose breath is of the heavens, whose path is peace ;

Whose presence fills all places with a light ;

Whose loss makes dark the sun, and poisons time ;

Can man mistake thee, and can woman feign,—

Using thy pure divinity as a mask ;

Or, from the depths of nature, tearing up

A power to hide the anguish and the crime

That blot thy vacant throne !

MAT. Do you apostrophise

Man's victim, or man's conscience ? If you seek

To force me to your will, or to my grave,

In neither shall you triumph.

GODF. Am I defied ?

MAT. Utterly !

GODF. And cursed : no spark of feeling left ?

MAT. I did not curse thee—and I do not now ;

I but defied you utterly.

GODF. (*dejectedly*). With scorn

And placid hate.

MAT. With neither. I have chosen

My part in life, and that will I fulfil !

And what are these our small domestic feuds,
Amidst a struggle shaking now the arch
Of mortal time o'er the eternal gulph?
In the contention of mere temporal power
'Gainst spiritual and temporal, you have taken
No single-minded part; or if a part,
Then opposite to mine. A mighty cause
Hath driven us asunder, not my hate.

- GODF. (*taking her hand*). Do you believe I love you?

MAT. You once loved me—

That I believe: why you should love me still,
I do not know, nor can I have your love.

[*Withdraws her hand.*]

GODF. Ah, wherefore not? it is as fond as ever!

MAT. Where hast thou hidden Gregory the Seventh?

GODF. Ha!

MAT. Prove thy love: I ask thee where he is?

GODF. Sorceress! bewitched fool! 't is the last time
That I will seek thee: he shall die like a dog!
The Emperor comes!—I'll mar the weak repentance,
And urge him—though I hate him for thy sake—
To vigorous action! I'll stir up all Rome,
And head a multitude that shall enforce
The imperial mandate against Gregory,
And justify his death; his dog-like death,
There, where he lies, held down as in a den,
And watched by men who thirst to see his blood!

MAT. Go, take them by the hand then: I give mine
To uphold the Pontiff—to dethrone the King—
And load your jailor friends with their own chains!

[*Exeunt, at opposite sides.*]

SCENE IV.—*A chamber, with a grated window, in the Tower of CENTIUS. GREGORY, in a penitent's garment, stands among some dark pillars at the back.*

GREG. A curse upon strong nerves and bones and
 thews ;

They listen not to caution. What a farce
Is this vile trap !

(Advancing). Why did I covet lands,
And new-born strength of means from coffers old ?
I could have done without them—and as well.

This garment, too !—my robes of state torn off—
Guido's suggestion, doubtless, and intended
To sink my body and soul back to a monk—
His great prescription for humility !

(After a pause). If I should die here ?—'t were an un-
 worthy end

To shovel my bones up in a little heap
In yonder corner ! *(Pauses.)* What I have done stands
 firm ;

And I, the doer, throned i' the highest place—
'T will make it dangerous work for murderers.
They 'll hardly venture it. Yet it may be done.

Enter GODFREY, in his armour.

GODF. At length the mighty Hydra is chained down !
His many-headed and arm-branching vices,
Spread out to meet the axe !

GRE. It sounds like justice.

GODF. Justice it is, and justice you shall have
Unto the last degree.

GRE. And that's the least.
What are my crimes? array them first before me!
If proved, your conscience and the popular voice
Are sure to acquit you; but I claim a hearing.

GODF. Oh, you shall have your claim—be satisfied:
Good hearers are at call. My lords!—I pray ye
Come hither to pass sentence!

Enter CENTIUS, FABIO, TANCREDI, and GUIDO.

'T is the trial
Of an apostate, sacrilegious monk,
Who would amuse us first with his defence.

[GODFREY seats himself in the centre, with
CENTIUS and FABIO on one side, and
GUIDO and TANCREDI on the other.

GRE. (*aside*). They sit—their swords hang passive.

GODF. Prisoner!

Approach and hear the charge.

[GREGORY slowly approaches.

CEN. I'll make the first,
With your permission, lords. (*To Gre*). The popular
voice

Is strong against the extortions of your state;
Your new enactments gall their social life;
And your contention with the Emperor
Will ultimately cost much blood and gold,
Forced from the mass of men for no one good.

GRE. Are you a vassal of the Emperor?

CEN. No.

TAN. We are loyal.

FAB. Loving.

GUI. So am I.

GRE. Is Godfrey loving to the Emperor ?

GODF. Peace, criminal! Most reverend Guido, speak!

GUI. I would not trample on a wretched man,
Full soon, perchance, to quit this mortal scene ;
But duty urges me a charge to make,
Where crimes so manifold pollute the time.
How he obtained his power by fraud and force ;
By murder, sacrilege, and cunning, kept it ;
By rapine and extortion heaped up wealth,
For bribes and scheming villanies of all kinds ;
Is common in men's mouths as Tiber's water,
Though black as Acheron when thus compared.
Edicts detestable, and heresies,
Whereby we know not aught for what it was——

GRE. Divining, chiromancy, gift in signs ;
A phoenix faculty to dance in fire,
And special learning in the magic arts ;
Whereby we know not aught for what it was !

GODF. Your gibes are loose mould on the edge of
a grave,
And wait the wafting wind !

GUI. Of heresies,
It were enough for proof, to steal one glance
At his new calendar of saints—a thought
Surpassing credence in a future age !
Of edicts—uttered with a tongue as bitter
As a green stick ; yea, as the holly sap ;
Or written in blood—what more detestable,
More tyrannous, than his divorce of priests
From loving wives ? enforcing celibacy,
While that himself in deep-secluded hours,
So far removed from purity——

GODF. Proceed!—

Proceed to further charges!

GRE. Guido, beware!

And you, Count Centius, Fabio, and Tancredi,
Take you good heed of him who urges you,
From personal motives to commit foul deeds.

I do believe the popular voice is with me:

Offer me violence, and ye'll be arraigned

As base assassins; or, perhaps, torn to pieces

By Rome's infuriate mob, without a trial,

As now ye threaten me!

GODF. Listen not to him!

Tried you shall be, condemned, and executed.

GRE. This you determine previous to my trial,
Most second-sighted judge!

CEN. (*to Godf.*) Condemned to chains
Within this tower?

GUI. (*whispering*). For life, with little food.

GODF. Oh, my lords, shame on all these half resolves!
He nought denies the charges here alleged;
The plague o' the time must ne'er again be sent
Into the world. By his detested arts—
Be they of magic, charms, occult, or common,
Abuse of heavenly things, or nature's weakness,
He has ensnared from all allegiance,
As from all love, the Emperor's royal mother;
The Duchess Beatrice, his kinswoman—
Both these having great weight and influence—
And Tuscany's princess. I could say much more;
For I have greater cause than any here,
To know and punish this usurper's crimes.

GRE. It is a novel and a noble sight,

Just, excellent, and edifying withal,
To see the chief complainant act the judge.

GUI. (*starting up, and listening*). What?

GRE. The judge plays conjurer now, and makes the
winds

Alarm Lord Guido's soul!

GODF. You play with words;
But if we lack an executioner,
Myself will play the headsman.

GRE. (*loudly*). You look like one, clad there in complete steel!

Instead of grave and senatorial robes,
Shining all over with imposture!

GODF. (*rising furiously, and drawing his sword*).
Wolf-head! [Rushes at GREGORY.

Thou shalt not live to vent another sound!

[Shouts outside.

GRE. My voice hath passed through yonder grated
window,

To those outside! They recognise it mine!
Go some one forth, and pacify my people!

[Noise increased. Exit CENTIUS, hurriedly.

GUI. (*aside*). I thought 't would end in this! 'T was
even now

I heard a hum in the air of distant voices.

[Violent blows upon the gates, and cries for
GREGORY.

Re-enter CENTIUS.

CEN. The populace surround the tower with torches,
And threaten conflagration!

GODF. Let them threaten!

Flames slowly mingle with deep walls of stone.
We'll bear our prisoner downward to the vaults,
And wait the event.

[*Shouts and blows. A glare of light from below
is seen through the grated window.*]

GRE. Meantime, my lords, 't were well,
Ere we descend unto these vaults below,
I should a few mild words address to the crowd
Through yonder grate, to prove myself not murdered.

CEN. Do so at once. Be brief.

GODF. And then descend:

[*GREGORY ascends to the grating. A loud
shout: he waves his hand, and it ceases.*]

GRE. Be pacified, my children! I am safe:
And that I may continue safe—this instant
Burst open the gates!

[*The gates are burst open. The populace
rush in with torches. GODFREY fights his
way out: the rest are secured.*]

*Enter MATILDA, AGNES, and BRAZUTE, with
Attendants.*

GRE. (*coming forward*). Where is the man in steel!
I do not see him with the prisoners.
My faithful guards! Hark you, sir!
(*Aside to an Officer*). Take a troop
And follow Godfrey wheresoe'er he flies:
Hack off his armour piecemeal from his limbs,
And if the limbs fall too, God's will be done!

AGN. The impious villains!—chain them to the wall.

BRAZ. Pyrrhicasii!

AGN. (*to Cen*). Let the populace applaud!

MAT. The Emperor hath in Rome this night arrived.

GRE. In good time comes he to perform his penance.

(*Aside*). But one day sooner, and events had changed.

(*Aloud*). A penance, measured by his weight of crime.

(*To the prisoners*). We'll think of ye, my lords, and at our
leisure,

Ye shall hear further. Give me a robe!

[*They cover GREGORY with a splendid mantle.*

Lead on!

Now for this sun-set Shadow of a King!

[*Exeunt GREGORY, MATILDA, AGNES, BRAZUTE,
and suite, with guards and populace.*

[*Manent CENTIUS, GUIDO, TANCREDI, and FABIO,
chained along the wall.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Colonnade in Rome.*

Enter MATILDA and DAMIANUS.

MAT. You falter—your lip quivers—and methinks
'T is not the first time you have verged on this,
And found no resolution shape your speech !
But why leave Rome ? why separate yourself
From Gregory's confidence, to brood alone
Within some distant monastery's cell ?

DAMI. I do grow old and care-worn, noble lady,
And weak of health.

MAT. Sure, 't is not envious spleen
At the o'erwhelming glory of the change
Wrought by one man, while thou art left behind
At bottom of the hill, round which of yore
Ye both paced side by side, gazing towards heaven.

DAMI. Ah, no ! I would but seek that state once more.
The pleasant, peaceful, bird-awakened days
Of learned solitude ; the deep-mossed groves
In Clugny, where together we oft read
The words of earth's great patriarchs, and the lore
Of many a clime, were to my satisfied heart
More natural far than bickering crowns of power.
I, therefore, crave your influence with the Pontiff,
For prompt permission to depart.

MAT. What need
Of influence, good father ?

DAMI. Pray you, grant it,
And question me no deeper.

MAT. You have some enmity, some secret fear,
At bottom of this wish.

DAMI. (*wildly*). I do confess it !
My life long since hath been made up of fear,
Which all my thoughts and feelings rush to feed,
Turning my nature thus against myself.
Question me not ; I dare not utter more ;
But gain permission that I may depart—
And be you ever blessed ! [Exit.

MAT. This is most strange !
Oft have I marked a deep awe trench his face,
And fill his cheek with shadows, while he gazed
On Gregory. I deemed 't was reverence
For those all-subjugating qualities :
But now he stammers and shakes with fear aghast,
As though a phantom should step through the wall,
Or rise up from the earth beneath his feet,
And take him by the hair ! Why, why is this ?
A worthy, learned, close-conforming monk,
And high in confidence, might well expect
Preferment ; yet, with shuddering tones he sues
To hide his days in some far monastery !
Gregory appals his thought : they're oft alone ;
And Damianus knows his deep designs—
Has always known them—and, perchance, could tell
Of deeds whose face would blacken in the light.
Where will this lead me ! to what dreadful doubts ?
My full-branched faith in Gregory hath been shaken,

And I have lost the fruit of all my life.
What if this being, whom I've ever held
The paragon of all that's great in nature,
Turn out half devil in that secret soul
Which lurks beneath man's human secrecy,
And feeds itself on humours all corrupt,
That burst in action? Dreadful, blighting thought!
Ye monstrous phantasies! ye unknown crimes!
Ye images, whose vague limbs alternate
Substance and shade, yet in your passage o'er
Imagination's deep-stained, troublous pool,
Shed germs that, as they fall, shriek into life!
Bloody realities and harsh facts of earth,
That startle us like spectres, being so plain,
But never deemed so near!—fade, fade away
From my confused and aching brain, or cease
To follow on my flight! Oh, let me think ye
The haunting shapes of mine own wickedness,
Or the sad fancies forced upon my heart
By Godfrey's cruel taunts! Would he were here!
I grieve, I weep that we are thus estranged. *[Exit.]*

[Voices outside.]

Enter a Rabble, and Officers with CENTIUS.

CEN. Shout, blindfold energies! ye would rather howl,
Could ye but understand that your own cause
Falls with your champion. *[Rabble shout.]*

OFFI. Forward to banishment!

CEN. Ay, banishment! Ye hear that? shout again!
Why are ye silent? Am I not the man
Who, for the popular welfare and defence,
Cast his patrician rank into the scale;

His wealth, his reputation, heart, and hope;
And poised his life o'er peril? Why are ye mute?
Have I not failed in all? Where are your taunts?

OFFI. On, towards the northern gates!

Voices. Return! return!

CEN. True sympathy is pitched too high for scorn,
And pity smiles on man's ingratitude.

I will return as with a meteor's speed,
When opportunity shakes hands with hope!

[*Exeunt clamorously.*]

SCENE II.—*Private Chapel in the Vatican.*

GREGORY, *kneeling before a lighted Shrine.*

GRE. And to behold
A shadowy portion of Thy Countenance
Reflected o'er the insufficient sea!
Let the great hopes of ages concentrate
In all their depth and splendour of device;
Best thoughts of men, and changeless essence fine,
Be mingled now in one eternal flame
To spring from this one altar! Oh, my God!
Thou send'st us time, even as a little rain;
Thou send'st us death, as potentates of earth
Their signet send; but send'st us prayer, to reach
The steep stars and the thrones of the Remote,
On palpitating and refulgent wings!
Now do I watch the triune Diadem,
Like a new planet, dawn o'er the world's shrine!
Its guiding spirit—central in my heart—
With solemn exhortation lighting up,
And vividly detaching from their shadows,

Broad continents of life, and tracks of splendour,
Ne'er seen by mortal eyes before ; but wrapped
I' the smouldering bosom of eternity,
Waiting Thy procreant hand of light, through me,
O God, the Giver !

[He rises, and stands awhile in silence.]

There was a carpenter of Tuscany,
Whose son, from a cowed monk, made himself Pontiff.
High-fronted saints and martyrs, men sublime
In aspiration and security,—
Trusting to virtue, wisdom, justice, peace,
The elements of nature in their souls,—
Have, by thus trusting, left their tasks undone,
Staked midst the roar of flames, or nailed and left
In silence on the lonely night-black cross.
So I, who know what blood I have within,
Do act, believing all mankind the same ;
And, being now in thunder throned above them,
Shall melt them with my fiery bolts, and pour
These tremblers in the moulds of my fixed will.
One Altar—one High Pontiff—and some kings,
Holding in fief their sceptres,—*[Signal at a secret door.]*
Lo, I come !
These small events do yet advance the whole.

Enter two Guards.

Godfrey is dead, then—no!—ye have poorly failed !

1st GUA. He has taken sanctuary.

GRE. Ha !—in my very hands !

Go now at once, with full authority—

Enter DAMIANUS.

DAMI. Thou wilt not have him at the altar slain !

GRE. What didst thou say?

DAMI. Oh, pause!

GRE. Repeat your words!

DAMI. That he—had taken sanctuary.

GRE. I thank thee:

The news is old. (*To the Guards.*) Finish it instantly!

1st GUA. If our souls——

GRE. Full—full pardon from the church

In her own cause!

[*Exeunt Guards.*]

Well said, self-sacrifice!

Think'st thou I'd be the victim?

DAMI. Oh, my lord!

Most high-dispensing Gregory! forgive me!

But I am thoroughly shaken by these things.

Since Alexander's death I've never prayed

Audibly; but in whispers, with closed eyes.

Horrors chase through my brain in dreams by night,

And, screaming, act the dreadful scene again!

Their monstrous variations seem all ours—

The madness ours! Oh, let there be no more!

GRE. No more deaths, except mine! would you say that?
For that's the alternative—and I've made my choice.
He raised his steel o'er me, and shall draw down
Electric answers!

DAMI. Doth this clear the conscience?

GRE. Ay, like the air!

DAMI. Oh, my liege, make 't not so light,
For conscience holds the balance of the world.

GRE. I have a conscience higher than the world,
And its opinion's narrow measurement;
Its timorous grasp and terrors of the will
At every magnitudinal desire,

With all the ruinous weakness of remorse,
Who lets the heaved-up stone roll down again,
A self-doomed Sysiphus.

DAMI. I trembling pray
For all my sins, and for frail human nature.

GRE. Frail what ?

DAMI. Frail nature—I do humbly own
All my unworthiness to be thus placed
Near one so lofty ; I would fain retire :
My health sinks daily.

GRE. You shall never leave me !
You followed me out of the cloister's shade,
Believing me a great Artificer !—
A throne-builder for God !—a putter-down
Of militant kings !—now you turn pale, beholding
My hands in actual work ; but you shall stay :
We've known each other's thoughts too well to part.
To your couch !—and in your dreams remember this,
In answer to your indigestion's fancies,—
Conquerors for space of earth their thousands kill ;
Lasting dominion o'er the soul—for which
A century full of life were cheaply given—
Needs but few offerings of this dust we wear. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Colonnade in MATILDA's Palace.*

*Enter the EMPEROR and EBERARDUS, attired
as pilgrims.*

EBE. Her intercession's sure : my liege, I pray you
Do not droop now—the worst is well nigh past.

EMP. (*despondingly*). How canst thou say the worst
—drive me not mad !

Think of the homage of enforced knees,
And suppliance to those we hate, for pardon !
Pardon for what ? Oh, do not speak to me,
I cannot bear remonstrance ! [*A Domestic passes.*
Stay you, sir !

You serve the Countess of Tuscany ?

DOM. Humph !—Whom serve you ?

EMP. Say to her that a friend would speak with her.

DOM. Wait here ! [*Exit Domestic.*

EMP. A menial bids me wait !

The lowest office, exercised in extreme,
O'ertops the highest with a gross burlesque.
To wait !—I cannot understand the change ;
Yet everything reminds me of my fall
From sceptre-sway to common, subject life.
Oh, dreadful Gregory ! accursed and dreadful !
His voice—his very substance haunts my soul.
His image over-shadows all my prayers ;
His large hands sway the air about my head,
And act like laws amidst the atmosphere ;
My forehead aches with gazing at his foot,
Puzzling its breadth and purpose. 'Tis his step !

EBE. My liege ! my liege !

EMP. I 'm no liege lord ! Away !

Enter MATILDA.

I pr'y thee, leave me ! [*Exit EBERARDUS.*

MAT. Should I not meet a penitent prince, who comes,
A subject's knee to offer to the church,
And sue the restoration of his crown ?

EMP. I am that powerless prince.

MAT. And penitent?

EMP. To heaven most contrite.

MAT. And to heaven's Vicegerent?

EMP. Oh, lady! dare I speak at such an hour
Of what I've felt in presence of thy beauty,
It would not sink me 'neath fair manhood's pride
Were I to ask some pity for my state.
I am o'ercome by Gregory as by a spell!
His curse, like lightning on a single oak,
Has left me charred and hollow. Armies fade
Before his voice: my subjects own no king;
My nobles cast me forth; my very arm
Hangs like a broken bulrush o'er the stream
Of my now stagnant life; and in my soul
Sorrow hath hung weed-garlands o'er each thought,
While terror guards the porch. Oh, when the sense
Of what I was, and what I am become,
Struggles for steady sight, the level earth
Wheels upward from beneath my feet, and leaves me
Constantly sinking! Lady, stretch forth your hand!
And let its lustrous whiteness interpose
In aid of one whose utmost wrong to you
Was fond oblivion of himself!

MAT. Beseech you,
No more of this; it pains me much, and wakens
The depths of other days, to you unknown,
But full of thoughts for me. Brief be your griefs!
And may the thorns now rankling round your brow,
Where late shone sovereignty, fall to earth, and rot
Beyond all memory's reach!

EMP. Sweetness and hope

Drop from their natural home upon your lips,
O'er my despair.

MAT. But, well advised, and bowed
With deep submission to the Rule supreme,
You hither come?

EMP. Oh! it doth grieve my spirit,
And yet enrapture me thy voice to hear,
Mingling sweet reconcilment with the gall
Of humbling authority. Pr'y thee, lady,
Is there some penance most severe in store?
For thus 't is rumoured to my feverish ear;
And, therefore, am I come to lay the grief,
The doubts, the fears, the madness of the thought,
Before thy mediating feet!

MAT. 'T is true,
Some penance is enjoined; I know not what;
But counsel thee to humble all thy pride,
And then resume thy crown.

EMP. But what the penance?

MAT. Doubtless not much in bodily form and show;
The spirit 't is must bow.

EMP. Madam, you pour
An urn of balm upon my tortured mind:
I shall in all things follow your advice.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Grand Hall in the Vatican.*

GREGORY, *in full state, standing on his throne. Cardinals, Bishops, Abbots, Nobles, Monks, Soldiers, and a vast concourse, are on their knees.*

GRE. I bless the world ! let the far nations hear it !

[A trumpet peals forth one lengthened note.

First, all ye pillars of the Church of Rome,
Receive the rays of beatific peace,
And let your massy glory shed around
Light, warmth, and splendour, wisdom, beauty, hope,
To fill the heart of faith, and grace your power !
In just gradation next, its dignitaries,
Who walk erect, through life's uneven ways,
Blessing and blessed ; and all our holiest hands
And ablest servitors,—whether to uplift
The sick or faltering, and the impious crest
To smite ; and whether holding temporal sway
From high patrician ancestry, whose deeds
Crimson fame's cheek with pride, or humbly bearing
Office monastic, and a spirit of life
Whose purity toucheth heaven ! Thence, the vast throng,
Bowed in a flock o'er this their pasturing field ;
Sinful, yet hopeful—and who may be saved—
And children all, of every loving land,
Whose souls, like matin dews, rise up from earth !

[Solemn note of a trumpet, as before. All rise, except GUIDO, TANCREDI, and FABIO, who continue kneeling, in chains. GREGORY sits.

Lastly, I do confer protecting thoughts
On prostrate sinners,—who have rigidly,
And to the very roots of inward sense,
Their due amount of penances performed ;—
And on all living creatures and things that walk
Or creep along the earth, or skim the sea
And air! Rise, penitents; go forth, forgiven!

[GUIDO, TANCREDI, and FABIO rise, and step
aside with humility.

Where is the other penitent, once a king?

[DAMIANUS comes forward.

DAMI. Oh, supreme Ruler! the dethroned man,
In ashes and sackcloth, barefoot stands without,
On the bitter stones, awaiting your behest,
And praying constantly, with a loud voice,
For pardon and restoration!

GRE. It is well:

I'll think of him anon.

Enter the EMPRESS AGNES.

AGN. My lord! high Pontiff!

It is the winter season—I had forgot—
Bethink, your holiness, of what you do!—
'T is winter's worst——

His aching gleams pierce through the marble floor,
To the clear-eyed sun insensible; while, barefoot—
Barefoot, the Emperor stands, and all his prayers
Are choaked in clouds of his congealed breath!
Bethink you, well!

GRE. I do; and it is good.

AGN. Good!—while the Emperor——

GRE. There's no such office.

AGN. What mean'st to do? What's this! I cannot bear

To see't. My son, an Emperor skilled in arms,
Thus held in lengthened penance! To what end
Is this unnecessary harshness shewn,
When all the forms of man's humility
Have to the church been tendered?

GRE. (*with severity.*) Royal lady!
Maternal guardian! you do ill in this.
Not for mere forms of man's humility,
These acts of penitence do I enjoin;
But for the true prostration of his pride,
And heretic wickedness.

AGN. Look to thyself,
High pontiff! 'T is a treacherous exercise
Of thine authority to use us thus!
My naked heart returns unto my son,
And leaves its rent, soiled garment unto thee! [*Exit.*

[GREGORY *descends slowly from his throne.*

GRE. (*aside*). It must be done, though she should
take his place;
And that, methinks, were also very good.
She shall be watched.

Enter MATILDA.

Why wer't not here before?

MAT. (*to Gre.*) I have just seen,
Not without sympathy, not without pain,
The Emperor standing barefoot on the stones!

GRE. The man you mean was once an emperor:
Now he is nothing.

MAT. Yes, he is still a man.

GRE. Whate'er he was, or is, in fact or fancy,
To nothing shall he come!

MAT. Sure to forgiveness?—

Though you delay it to extremity.
The penance you enjoin is too severe.

GRE. (*aside to Matilda, and hoarse with passion*).
Too, too severe! Daughter, I'll judge of that.
You are presumptuous, weak, and ignorant,
To interfere, and fail at such a pass!
It is the very point and pinnacle
Of proof, beyond dispute, and sets at rest,
Beneath the monument of his disgrace,
Built up of prayers and groans of penitence,
Their quilllets for all future emperors,
Who shall look back upon this day—and bow
Their heads, like savage nations when they hear
The exalted thunder! Get thee from my sight!
I'll have no purblind, short-breathed policies:
Up the high hill at one great bound I'll go,
And then direct the light seen from afar.
Away! What dost thou here with half resolves?
Retire, retire!—I waste myself upon you.

[GREGORY resumes his throne.

MAT. (*stunned*). Some hand assist me! [*Exit, blindly.*

GRE. Let the penitent now
Approach the seat of mercy! Lead him hither!
[*Exeunt Monks in attendance.*

His diadem I purpose to restore,
Receiving him once more beneath heaven's wing,
When that his heart is humbled with the dust.

*Enter a procession of Monks; and then the EMPEROR,
in sackcloth and ashes, bare-headed and bare-footed,
with a rope round his waist. He kneels before GRE-
GORY, who raises his right hand in sign of vicegerent
power.*

SCENE V.—*A Colonnade in Rome.**Enter AGNES.*

AGN. Oh, for a bolt of lightning, to strike down
And scatter all Rome's statuary in the streets !
To sweep her gods to an impalpable dust,
Confused and lost in air ! Let the dread hand
Of great avenging nature, in our cause,
Heap this blind city in one funeral pyre ;
Where treacherous Gregory may sit crowned with flames !
But of this blindness what dark share was mine ?
What error, and what madness of resolve !
Why did I listen to Matilda's voice,
Devoted as she is, and lost of soul,
To this arch-demon, whom she thought a saint ;
Though now the strong truth beats upon her brain,
Or 't will do soon, as with an iron mace,
By knowledge of his crimes ! My princely son !
What, in the winter, too ? Ne'er could I dream
Of such a penance, and a bodily act
Outreaching credible sense. I was betrayed.
See, who come hitherward ! more penitents ;
Rage and self-hatred struggle in their looks.

Enter GUIDO, TANCREDI, and FABIO.

How fare your knees, my lords ? do they not glow
With keen reflections of your contrite hearts ?

TAN. With shame and fury, rather !

FAB. And deep hate.

AGN. Then whet your blades upon your ignominy,
And send the poison back with every blow.

TAN. Would it could be !

AGN. It can be, and it shall !

The Tuscan armies loathe this Gregory,
Who scowls and scoffs at his best friend—the sword !
And ranks a soldier as the lowest tool
Of his supremacy.

GUI. Madam, you know the Princess
Of Tuscany ?

AGN. Yes ; and methinks she's ours !
Canst prove the murder of Pope Alexander ?
Canst give me proof of this, and other deeds
Now darkly rumoured ?

GUI. No ; but certainly
You can obtain them, as I may advise.

AGN. Enough. Matilda's soul by these fierce truths
Shall be enfranchised.

TAN. Madam, you startle us !

AGN. The German troops will gladly snatch a chance
Of thrusting home his scorn.

TAN. But who will lead them ?

AGN. I, in my son's name ! I will lead them on.

Enter the EMPEROR, in a rich robe, with ghastly looks.

TAN. (*aside*). How doth the lingering sense of Gre-
gory's curse,

Though now removed, return upon his heart !

EMP. Have I once more a name ?

GUI. Great sir, take life
Into your own high hands !

TAN. Trample our shame !

EMP. (*abstractedly*).

Thou preternatural influence ! thou pall,
From whose incumbent darkness o'er my head,
The dead-faced sufferers and the gleaming ghosts
Start, and leap down with cries upon my soul !
Break up the substance of thy panoply
Of torment—Oh, retreat into the night !
And let the shape-thronged whirlwind of thy spell,
In clouded silence, with no parting hints,
Shift and disperse ! What are all these ?

GUI. He dreams.

AGN. O, pallid image of an heroic prince !
Art thou my son ?

EMP. This is a sorry hour !

AGN. For Gregory. Dost thou mark ?

EMP. What wouldst thou say ?

AGN. Heap up destruction !

EMP. Upon Gregory ?

AGN. Upon whom else in the wide world ?
Stands he not up, the highest devil that's set
Amidst the scorching desert ? From prostration
Spring serpent-like, and strike the idol down !

EMP. (*bitterly*). He was thine idol once, though never mine :
I looked not for this change.

AGN. It is *his* change
That hath unscarfed mine eyes, and I do loathe him
An hundred fold for that my soul once worshipped.

EMP. His change ?

AGN. Say rather, the discovery
By circumstance, which sails on every wind,
Of blackest regions, earthed up in his heart ;
Luxuriant with all fruits that breed despair,

Though 'neath a sapphire and carbuncle blaze,
Ripe hanging over pits of dazzling gloom,
'They lied of crowns in heaven. Rise, thou king!
His deeds in secret shall no longer bloom,
But rot in daylight. From thy mind cast off
All sense of sanctity, all reverent fear
Of his usurped vicegerency of heaven:
Murder and mischiefs, heresies and lies,
Shall soon be hung i' the air where all may see!

EMP. I gasp for too much breath! Hear I aright?

AGN. Nay, more; methinks, Matilda wavers from him.

EMP. Matilda! No, no!—say you?

AGN. Believe it well.

Of Godfrey art thou sure; for even now
I learnt that Gregory's murderous guards pursued him,
E'en to the fane, where he took sanctuary;
And long were seen to glide around the walls.
Taunt me not, then, with this my sudden change;
But taunt thy pride with its base penitence!

EMP. All thou canst say falls faint in my hot ear:
I hate myself! I madden at my thoughts!

AGN. I'm glad to see it: but waste not thy passion
Upon things past: the German nobles now
Will crowd around thee with their powers: I know
They cannot brook the insatiate despotism
Of one who stole the eternal keys, and feigned
That angels stooped and laid them in his lap.
To full allegiance gladly they'll return.

EMP. Is this true?

AGN. It will prove so. Centius
Must be recalled, who, with these outraged lords,
And hosts beside, will join thee in the field.

TAN. We will—we will !

EMP. Peace ! I can hear no more !

AGN. Let nations hear thee ; and speak first to Rome !
Dominion waits thee : look up, like an eagle,
And scan the circles of yon altitude
Which shall be thine ! Gregory no longer shines.

EMP. What ! this Infallible, whom I have felt
The adumbration and the realised power
Of heaven and earth ; chief substance of the forms
That walk upon the walls of destiny !

A murderer, dost thou say ? A heretic ?

GUI. Oh, the bright day ; the excellent, holy day !

EMP. The German nobles, and the Tuscan force,
With friends in Rome beside ?

AGN. All will be thine.

EMP. When that my armies faded from my call,
I moved as in a dream ; now do I wake,
And will repay, with deadly certitude,
The sufferings of involuntary sleep.

AGN. (*embracing him*). Thou art my son—my great,
imperial son !

EMP. Again I feel a king, and doubly strong :
First did I mount the throne by lawful choice ;
Now will I carve me out an emperor's seat—
Space, wealth, dominion, majesty, and might—
By trampling opposition into mire,
Till none shall know where Gregory's armies stood !

[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Hall in MATILDA's Palace.**Enter GODFREY, as if pursued.*

GODF. I have escaped his bloodhounds!—now no more
Is aught held sacred!—even from the fane,
Where I took sanctuary, have his minions driven me!
I saw their silent-laughing, wolfish eyes,
That shone demoniac through the painted glass!
Oh, what a state is mine! Worn and exhausted
With passion, foiled revenge, and sleepless nights—
Pursued by murderers—my friends subdued,
Or linked with those I hate; now am I forced
To shelter my devoted form here—here—
In the palace of a most unloving wife,
Abetting my arch-foe! Most hated Gregory!
Has not my folly equalled all my hate!
No opportunity, no gleam of chance,
Since the full hour of vengeance which I wasted,
Hath e'er illumed my rapier's darkened blade.
Now what's to do?—A fiery struggle's at hand!
The Emperor in the field—must I join him?
I choke at the thought!—yet, to thrust Gregory down,
It should be done. I'll see Matilda first.
Strange rumours and misgivings thicken the air—
Where is she? Oh, where should she be, my heart!

[Exit.]

*Enter two Papal Guards, with drawn swords; and
exeunt cautiously after GODFREY.*

Enter MATILDA.

MAT. He wastes himself upon me !—this the reward
Of sympathies that reached from heaven to hell,
Steeped thrilling in his never-questioned course !
Now do the ethereal and the nether fires
Confuse and mingle their extremes—What's that ?
A strange breath stung my shoulder from behind !
What are those footfalls ? Well—well—nothing in life
Seems natural to those sick of it ; grief conjures
With commonest sounds and things. I am, indeed,
In extreme wretchedness, and my knees tremble
With fast-declining health. Poor Damianus !
He, too, is sinking. [*Exit.*

[Clash of swords within.

Re-enter GODFREY, mortally wounded.

GODF. Oh, he has reached me ! he has reached my life
By hireling steel !—would he had done it himself,
So should my death-grasp sway him down before me. [*Falls.*
The blow has stunned me ! I am shading off
To a sick air ! My soul fades fast away !

Re-enter MATILDA.

MAT. It is my husband !—murdered !—Godfrey—
Godfrey !
He bleeds !—it pours out ! Stop, stop ! Oh, my God !
Lift up !—speak, Godfrey !—speak to me !
In mercy, look at me, and speak !

GODF. (*dying*). It is an ice-drop
That sinks through the melting mist.

MAT. Oh, Godfrey, look at me!

GODF. And a faint voice, heard far—o'er the misty sea!
Was it my wife who cried far off in the mist?

MAT. It is! it is thy wife! Look up!

GODF. I loved her—
And send a last farewell.

MAT. (*wildly catching his hand*). Say you forgive her?

GODF. Great God! is this Thy hand
Passing me onward? [Dies.

MAT. He is gone!—and I,
An unforgiven wretch, do seem to have hastened
His awful passage. This is Gregory's deed!
Where have I been? Godfrey, awake! awake!
I cast off—I curse Gregory! Fix not on me
Thy blood-shot, stony eyes!—Forgive, forgive!

[GREGORY is heard calling without.

GRE. Where are these Tuscan dullards?—they were
wont
To lead the van of all the Papal force!

MAT. It is his voice! Come, ponderous Mystery!
Betrayed of the soul and body, come!

Enter GREGORY.

GRE. Rebellion rides the wind; I hear his cry!
Marshal our Tuscan—Oh, the accursed slaves!
They've killed him in his wife's palace!

MAT. (*rising*). Look here!

GRE. Who did it?

MAT. Art thou an iron bell,
Tolling men's dooms, insensible thyself?

There are dread words i' the blood of those who're murdered!

Appalling pictures, voices, pointing hands!

Murderer! look, look in the widening mirror there!

There, where it ebbs into eternity,—

Wilt thou dare ask of me again, "Who did it?"

GRE. By what sad accident found he this end?

MAT. Pontiff, no more! From my o'erladen soul
I cast thee, as its heaviest load of guilt!

Much could I say—I leave it to your thoughts—

And much that lies too deep for any speech.

In presence of yon bleeding form, I burst

All links that bound me to thee, and do pour

His blood and his eternity between us!

Within! within!—

Bring hither my white robes!

My bridal night-dress, with sweet herbs and flowers,

To wrap my lord in!

Enter Attendants.

Where, where shall we go!

[Exeunt MATILDA, and Attendants, bearing the body.]

GRE. *(after a pause)*. And where are now my hopes?

Can the grey ashes,

Which sullen years shake from a dead man's urn,

Rise, like the procreant dust of autumn's weeds,

And plant themselves to supersede designs

Of noblest harvest?—can calamity

Fall on the far futurity of my fields,

And their great produce blight, with this one man?

Yes—yes—a palsy shakes time's giant hand.

O'er one poor corse Prometheus' self might stumble,

And sink on a sudden to dark fellowship !
Self-preservation thus seems double-edged,
And, guarding me, cleaves through my steep-set throne.
But then the future ?——So, his corse is gone !
But it has left his silence in the hall,
As if himself were present, though unseen.
Would he were living, fierce in glittering arms !
I should not feel or fear him as I do,
Mute—pallid—motionless—standing out straight !
Horrible ! horrible ! I never thought before
That death was horrible.——
It must be borne.
Matilda !—Oh, nought can supply this loss !

Enter an Officer.

OFF. Your sovereign Holiness !

GRE. Say it at once !

OFF. The Tuscan armies are withdrawn : e'en now
They pass the gates.

GRE. (*thoughtfully*). It is an evil hour.
They pass the gates ?—How stands the Imperial force ?

OFF. Great lord, the Emperor hath pitched a tent
Near to the baths of Titus, there to watch
The advancing of his army from the frontier.

GRE. 'T were fit he march from aught that's left of
Titus—

Titus, the embattled pestilence who marched
Against Jerusalem. Oh, these warlike brands !
Illiterate emperors and fighting kings.
Already so near !—but I was apt for this.
The Papal Guards ?

OFF. All armed for instant call,
But much o'ernumbered by the coming powers.

GRE. I'll go alone amidst their trembling spears,
And tell them—stay!—send Damianus hither.

[*Exit Officer.*]

Hath the galled Emperor burst my spiritual bonds?
He may be chained once more:—the means?—lord Guido!
Who like a leaf now quivers o'er the event,
And may fall either way. The Emperor yet
Shall wither 'neath my rod. Myself I'll plant
Full in his path tow'rds Rome, and shrouded close
In monkish garments, from beneath the cowl
With heaven's denouncement will his soul assault.
Thereto must Guido lend unconscious aid,
The madness of this sworder's sacrilege
To melt in dews of fear; thus twice disarmed
Before I strike him with my visible power.
But if he fall not?—how if he resist,
And with the vantage of his armies strive
My sway to level?—cursed be his hand!
He shall have no equality! I have wrought
For the supreme dominion of the world;
Have gained it, and must bear high onward still. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*Royal Tent near the Baths of Titus.*

*Martial Music. Enter Officers and Soldiers of the
Imperial Army, followed by German Nobles.*

1st OFF. Will it fare well with us?

1st NOB. Be sure of't, sir:

His Majesty of all our swords hath need,
And spurns no reconcilements. He approaches
With angry looks, but pardon in his hand.

Enter the EMPEROR, EBERARDUS, FABIO, Cardinals, and train. The German Nobles and Officers kneel.

EMP. Rise! and remember our great clemency;
And in your thoughts let past rebellion live
Only as fuel for your love. *[They rise.*
(To Ebe.) Art sure of this? Tancredi, then, will lead
The Papal armies.

EBE. He is seduced, my liege,
By Gregory's subtle and o'erwhelming tongue;
Albeit, methinks, himself will lead the fight.

EMP. Grant me to meet him flaming in the van!
Grant it, keen honour! Where are the veterans
Who fought my battles with me in Suabia?

EBE. They will arrive to-night.

FAB. If heaven be with us!

EMP. Our own picked German troops ourself will head:
The rest we shall distribute for command.

Enter AGNES.

Welcome, imperial mother! soon thou'lt feel
Thy son redeem his gage in thy proud thoughts.

AGN. I doubt it not; and higher to confirm
Thy purpose with strong hopes, I come to tell thee
The Tuscan army now is all thine own!

EMP. How should this be?

AGN. It is no matter how;
But understand at once that Godfrey's dead,
And hither soon Matilda will arrive
Thy cause to aid.

EMP. Matilda aid our cause !

The sound runs through my veins—didst say, Matilda ?
'Gainst Gregory too,—her husband dead ?

AGN. 'T is true.

EMP. (*aside*). Oh, what conflicting passions crowd
my soul

With lifting joy, too bright to see its way !
What memories of early blissful dreams
Quenchless imagination casts afresh
On the heaped embers of my wounded breast,—
Sore with disgrace, and prostrate penitence
Before the foot of one who held her fast
In supernatural bonds !—a rivalry,
Clear as the light at bottom of a well,
Though darkness wall its depths. Come, all my thoughts,
Hopes, passions, and the instincts of my nerves !
And to my sword give edge for Gregory's fall ;
Which hell roar up to meet, and midway poise
In soul-suspended torment ! What is this ?

Enter MATILDA and CENTIUS, with armed train.

Ye sainted shapes ! ye bright ecstatic powers,
That hover o'er us, what a change is here !

AGN. Count Centius, too, from banishment returned !

EMP. Princess of Tuscany ! we bid thee welcome
With a full heart, that's troubled with many things,
Yet hails thy presence with deep thankfulness,
And ever-cherished thoughts.

MAT. I recognise

The Emperor ! [*She moves apart.*]

EMP. Who knows not how to thank.
Welcome, good Centius ; heretofore, methinks,
Not loving toward us.

CEN. Gracious prince ! receive
My present frankness for apology :
The popular cause is flung aside, and sinks
Before these swollen contentions ; like small fry
Amidst the sweeping plunges, bursts, and whirls,
Of gross leviathans at war or sport.

[*Moving towards* MATILDA.

EMP. Your rudeness, sir, shall serve you best a-field.
(*To Mat.*) Well hast thou chosen thy general, noble
lady—

MAT. (*aside, moving apart*). The approach of man
fills me with shuddering,
Lest that he touch my garments, or set foot
Upon my shadow.

EMP. (*aside*). Wreck of loveliness !
Her thin hand—dimpled once and dazzling white,
Oft toying daintily with saffron locks,
Now hangs a sere-veined leaf at her straight side—
That's shapeless with neglect, and swollen with grief—
Whose waving symmetry was like a cloud
Of incense round a shrine.

AGN. (*to the Emp.*) She stands in a vision !
Let be awhile—the struggle is within.

EPH. Can nothing aid her ?

AGN. No, 't were dangerous :
She might sweep round and face us as her foes.

[*AGNES and the EMPEROR confer apart.*

MAT. (*aside*). Talking and plotting to pull Gregory
down !

His enemies—'t is possible—waste their lives
On him, as he did waste himself on me.
Oh, what a sickly weight ! what fluttering spasms !

But nobody shall know—not even he.
My hair's all scorpions and my brain all fire!
Its myriad thoughts are singing one fierce tune,
With confused unity that ends in ashes!
Merciful elements! oh, waste yourselves
On this crushed heart, and supersede revenge
In my oblivion!

EMP. (*to Mat.*) Doth the Tuscan force
Hold itself ready to obey our call?

MAT. (*as if waking*). It doth—and ye may all act
as ye will—

Nor care I if an earthquake take us all! [*Exit.*

EMP. Her brain is turned!

AGN. Quite—quite.

CEN. I fear she will run mad into her grave!
So sweet, so gentle once! Saw you her eye-balls
Project and glisten?

AGN. Think of her men at arms,
And of the heretic Pontiff!

1st CAR. Pray you forbear,
Most royal lady, that appalling union
Of words. Though Gregory we repudiate,
The holiness of the Sovereign Pontiff's office
Claims deepest reverence still.

EMP. It is most true.

AGN. We bend to your rebuke, lord Cardinal.

Enter GUIDO.

EMP. Welcome, our good archbishop of Milan!

GUI. To my dear liege, all homage! I am come,
In part to greet and bless you ere the strife;
In part a suppliant. [*He kneels.*

EMP. What is this, my lord?
We deemed thee ever loyal.

GUI. Ever, ever!
I now would crave a boon.

EMP. Name it, and rise!

GUI. Our holy Church with incense of its love
Thy steps attends, but I feel sick with fear
Lest thy fierce struggle with Pope Gregory,
Wherein we join, blind dangers should involve;
With foot too rude, the Church's sanctity
Approaching, and salvation of our souls,
Which ne'er should tamper with these mortal coils,
Setting at risk.

EMP. How's this?—my lord, no more!

GUI. (*agitated*). I have heard voices of the martyred
saints

Exhort me from the walls, the trees, the air!
And holy men came to me in the night,
And solemnly stood beside my trembling bed
With high-wrought speech! And one of them announced
A mission from above, with counsel charged,
In this your difficult pass, that so your feet
Unto your lawful throne should nobly speed,
But tread on nothing sacred by the way!

EMP. Thou dost confuse my sight! I'll hear no more.
Rise, rise my lord!

GUI. Yet hear the boon I crave.

EMP. Be brief.

GUI. That it would please you, gracious sir,
Forthwith to meet for conference and advice,
This holy father who a message bears
Of awful warning, vital to your soul

And to your crown. This do ere you advance
For battle.

AGN. Fie! thou'rt weak, my lord archbishop.

GUI. Weak as a mortal face to face with death,
And listening for his doom.

EMP. Is this a time?

GUI. It is my ghostly care—my love that cries
With voice importunate. This holy man
Awaits your coming.

EMP. I'll not see nor hear him:
Delay mars all.

GUI. (*rising*). Think of my words, great King!

AGN. Shall this suspend your sword, now raised to
cleave

Straight through the crest of hated Gregory!

EMP. It shall not! I shake off, and blow to the wind
All terrors of his usurpation's sway!
Marshal our horsemen! let the ringing steel
Give token of their mounting brilliancy,
Like armies fresh descended from the light,
Down-sweeping o'er the earth! On, on to Rome;
And wild-eyed tumult herald our advance!

[*Martial music. Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Outer walls of a Monastery.*

Marble tombs. Time, sunset.

Enter GREGORY, habited as a Monk, and DAMIANUS.

GRE. How now, frail nature! think'st thou I shall fail?
This way he'll pass, and here will I confront him
With solemn warnings from the endangered Church.

DAMI. I rise upon the waves of thy resolve :
My heart's uplifted, and I shall not fall.

GRE. Good Damianus, dost thou call to mind,
In Clugny's monastery, when we two
Were lowly acolites—'t is now some years ;
Forty and more—that, in my cell one night,
When all the brothers slept, an oath we swore
The papal power to lift above the crowns
Of subject princes ? Lo ! we've seen it done.
Now comes a final struggle for the hand
That wrought this work ; and if 't is hewn to earth,
Its deeds spring up the same.

DAMI. But thou 'lt prevail ?

GRE. Assuredly, as thou hast ever seen.

DAMI. (*aside*). And yet I tremble : would this hour
were past !

(*Aloud*). The Countess of Tuscany——

GRE. She will return.

Do not disturb my calm. Think'st thou, lord Guido
Was urged sufficiently ?

DAMI. I well believe it.

GRE. Then will vague fears enforce him constantly
Unnerve the Emperor's purpose, and prepare
His impious will for censure. Hark ! retire !

[*Distant sound of martial music.*]

DAMI. (*aside*). If they should recognise him ?—if he
fail—

Unarmed amidst their madness—and alone ?
He must not know my fear.

GRE. Retire, I say !

DAMI. Your guards I'll plant at call—let me, too, stay !
In time of peril I would never leave thee !

GRE. My purpose will be best advanced alone.
It is the Emperor with his train that come
This way : his armies pass o' the other side.
Retire, good Damianus.

DAMI. God inspire thee ! [Exit.

GRE. I do invoke it from the boundless depths
Of this my human heart ! Oh, give me words,
As from Vulcanian forges, armed in proof,
To shield or smite ! (*lets fall the cowl over his face*)
and to my breath impart
A spirit of lightning ! Blasted be his tree
Of life, which I will tear down and uproot,
Chanting Thy Name !

Enter the EMPEROR, EBERARDUS, and GUIDO.

EMP. Why stand'st thou in my path ?

GRE. It is my path, O Emperor ! and not thine.
I am a servant of yon holy house,
To which thou also shouldst in faith belong,
And kneel with reverence.

EMP. Stand aside, rude monk !
Dar'st thou my faith impugn ?

GRE. By God's command !
'T was not in dreams that pious Guido heard
The spiritual breathings of the night,—
The deep words echoed from a sphere remote :
Beware ! thou 'rt warned !

GUI. My liege, our souls are perilled !
(*Aside*). And yet that voice—that voice—would I dare
speak !

EMP. (*to Gui.*) This is the holy man, of whom——

GUI. It is.

GRE. The broad sun sets ; and o'er yon vault is spread
A smouldering purple, touched with crimson flame,
And based on gloomy gold. So shews the fate
Of kingdoms. Yet a little while, and night
Comes down, and with a universal blot
Sweeps out the gorgeous picture. Wickedness
Is short-lived as this scene ; and while the glare
Of the world's tainted glory gilds its skirts,
Evanishing so fast—from bottomless pits
Issues its first wild cry midst torments fierce,
Prepared for impious kings, who each shall have
His own exclusive hell.

EMP. Father, these words,
Which I receive prophetic, as yon scene,
Of Gregory's turbulent grandeur and dark fall,
Dar'st thou to me apply ?

GRE. To thee, and all
Who'd trample on the Church !

EMP. I vow myself
Her truest servant.

GRE. Wouldst thou equivocate
With the all-seeing, the all-knowing God,
His high Vicegerent scorning !

EMP. Never, never !

GRE. Kneel'st thou before the Apostolic chair ?

EMP. Most reverently !

GRE. With armies at thy heel ?

EMP. My armies march to thrust from off the throne
Of sanctity, a bold usurping man ;
The tyrannous arch-hypocrite Gregory !
Father, give way !—set on !

GRE. Behold these tombs !

EMP. Time presses—see'st thou not thy lord—thy king?

GRE. What is a lord or a king compared with thunder?
See them stand underneath; mark well their looks,
And think of nobility! These are the tombs of kings!

EMP. The dead are silent. Give me passage, monk!
What wouldst thou more?

GRE. The silence of a corpse
Is thunder to the soul! Listen awhile,
And thou shalt hear these monuments rehearse
The woes of nations; uttering cavernous sighs,
Death-fraught as pestilent breezes borne afar
From isles of gloom along the sweltering sea.
Sumatra, Java, and dark Borneo,
Ne'er shook from heavy and hearse-headed trees
Such baleful odours! Think'st thou that the souls
Of those who made large havoc in the world,
Peopling the grave in virtue of their crowns,
By wars accursed, are now enshrined in bliss?
Think'st thou to 'scape the torments of their doom
By reverent words, while devastating brands
Await thy shout for blood, e'en in the eye
Of heaven's Vicegerent?

EMP. Monk, I will not fear thee:
Nor shall thy words sink deeper than mine ear,
Since Gregory is cast out!

GRE. Cast out! By whom?

EMP. By his own deeds, which sing aloft i' the wind,
Like evil spirits forced to celebrate
The history of their fall. There is no Pontiff!

GRE. Who saith it?—thou! Thou fell'st before his
power,
Flat as a shadow! Gregory to the Church

Hath been her lifting and firm-holding arm ;
To her dominion adding force and scope ;
To all her sanctity a higher aim ;
To all her splendours unity of tone ;
Taking and giving an exulting light,
Like to a scarlet mantle in the sun !

EMP. The Babylonian scarlet !

GRE. (*tearing off his monk's habit*). Fires o' my heart !

EMP. What ho, my guards ! is this an ambushade ?

Imperial Guards *rush in*; and DAMIANUS, *with several Cardinals: the latter range themselves beside*
GREGORY.

GRE. Fires o' my heart !—thou central source of fire,
Loose all thy tides !

EMP. They shall not turn my course.

GRE. Down to thy knees ! Behold me as I am,
The ruling presence, bearer of God's keys !
The golden, self-sustained, pre-eminent cloud,
Whose inward breast holds all immortal life !

EMP. That cloud is black within, and it shall burst
In rain, and disappear from the earth's face.
I spurn thy usurpation, and defy thee !

GRE. (*slowly*). Emperor of Germany ! why art thou here
With armed bands and homicide looks of war ?
Why flash the bloodshot eyes o' the trembling steeds ?
Why scream the trumpets o'er the music, tuned
To barbarous deeds, while banner and buckler shew
Gross painted effigies which commemorate
The glorious battles of immortal fools
Who drove out mercy from the human heart,
And with red Furies filled the steaming fields ?

Why art thou here, chief lamp o' the horrid show ;
And what are thy intents ?

EMP. To enter Rome,
And in the Vatican proclaim aloud
Thy wickedness and fall.

GRE. Bethink you well
Of your last visit.

EMP. Therefore am I come.
Oh ! doubt me not I shall remember it ;
The better, that with reason in the mouth
And madness in the brain, thou comest to thrust
A brand amidst my never-closing wounds,
And urge to final action by thy calm
Smile of insane superiority.
Forward to Rome !

GRE. I do forbid you, solemnly, in the name
Of all——

EMP. All thou profanest by thine own deeds :
I scorn thy raving and thy prohibition.
And what shall serve thy taunts at feats of arms ?
Disgust at the keen glories and high scenes
Of necessary and ennobling war,—
The hypocritical horror in thy looks ?
Thou, who didst get and hold preposterous power
Entirely through main force and sworded hands ;
Else hadst thou lived and died within thy cell,
An obscure, scowling, self-corroded monk.

GRE. (*calmly*). This is not true.

EMP. Not !

GRE. (*passionately*). By my soul, 't is false !
Was it by war I made Rome high in art ;
Heaped her with beauty and magnificence ?

Was it by war vast libraries were filled,
And wise men ceased to beg about the streets?
Was it by war the Vatican reared her crest
O'er all your temporal palaces and powers?
Was it by war, by main force, and the sword,
That I, the son of a poor carpenter
Of Tuscany, did gather up strong thoughts,
Learning, and eloquence, and energy,
Till on my brows I fixed the triple crown,
And made an Emperor kneel like a child before me?

EMP. (*stamping with rage*). To arms!

GRE. See where he flies to arms, d' ye mark!
Forbear, I charge ye! Dread the curse of Rome!

EMP. We'll dread no curse that one like thee can hurl.
Stand from my path on peril of thy life!

[DAMIANUS and the Cardinals advance.]

GRE. My life is sacred, as my curse is sure:
I do revoke the pardon I conferred!

EMP. I dare thee to the field! Away! away!
On to the city!

GRE. And again depose thee,—

EMP. Sound to the charge! [Trumpets.]

GRE. And excommunicate!

EMP. Charge the Papal Guards!

[Exeunt all but GREGORY.]

Alarum. The charge without.

GRE. (*after a pause*). Power writhes out of my grasp,
while I do seem

To crush what I would cherish; and the coils
O' the high-necked dazzling serpent, wise and strong,
Drop heavy at my feet!

The charge without. Enter an Officer.

You had my orders!

OFF. They were clear as steel,
But could not be effected.

GRE. Could not be?

OFF. Dread sir, the Emperor hath this instant charged
With his main force.

GRE. (*contemptuously*). I heard him:
So may you know

By the small click of his machinery,
When the invisible grasshopper takes a leap
At the far sun. Your phalanx did not move?

OFF. 'T will move no more till the Last Day!

[*Retreat sounded.*

Enter a Messenger.

GRE. And you?

MESS. The Count Tancredi—your chief leaders—all
Are slain! The Papal forces fly!

GRE. For vengeance!
They fly to the onslaught?

MESS. No, no! for their lives.

GRE. Now, by my father's hand! my mother's spirit,
Which early broke her heart! I little reck
These closing accidents of life's brief scene.
The world doth spin from underneath my feet,
Or else my brain turns giddy and sick with its noise.

Enter DAMIANUS.

What worse, what worse?—pale Damianus, speak!

DAMI. Oh, friend! dread sir! your troops are all
dispersed.

Take refuge now: ere long you may return.

GRE. My heart's too heavy to move. Curses pursue them!

DAMI. Oh, stay not here! you tempt your fate.

GRE. I do;

And I defy her! Fate's an idiot
Confronted by man's will; and never yet
A single high-branched action reared or blighted;
But only gabbled after all was done.
I'll wait till the firmament comes down.

DAMI. What shape
Of desolate agony approaches now?

GRE. Away, and let it come! [*Exit DAMIANUS.*]
What more can come,
When hope is irretrievably lost and gone?
'Tis she!—now would I turn aside, and shun
The sands of such an hour. She comes to me!

Enter MATILDA (who advances with an air of forlorn anguish, breaking occasionally into fits of distraction).

MAT. Perfect humanity of Christian souls!
All knowledge, grace, and happy love are thine,
Pure nature guides the clearness of thy ways,
And general misery shews 't is all a lie.
See! see!—see what a piteous height she rose!
Methought she leaned upon a heavenward tower,
And the tower fell to earth. Light, light the candles!
The shrine is dark. Now it sheds blood for rays!
Now all is dark again; and laughter shakes
The base o' the crucifix! There is a hand
Upon me!—tomb-o'erstumbling misery
Hales me by the hair before Christ's spurning foot!
A cold shape rises—it is Annihilation!—

Oh, thou cold Glare ! froze, eyeless Altitude !
Dim, interlunar giant ! shadowed light
Of my lost substance of eternity,
Receive this wasted being ! No, no, no !
I would fain live, and save my sinking soul.
The shrine bursts forth in light ! I am turned black—
Opaque—incapable to take one ray.
Oh, thou sweet-featured Christ ! look not upon me
With eye severe : I strove on fatal wings,
And most sincerely fell. Give me the cords !
The music sounds at Satan's wedding feast ;
I must dive deep down through the icy air !

GRE. Am I the shape I was—the thing called power,
That woke this morn from natural human sleep ?

MAT. (*approaching Gre.*) Oh, you are here !
Emperor of Germany, I know you well,
Though you disguise yourself like Gregory !
But what avails you that ?—the gravest dwarf
Doth look most laughable in a great man's robes.
I come to say I shall return to him,
With all the Tuscan forces : they're not like
Godfrey's imaginary myrmidons ;
But steel-shod cattle to tread empires down :
And thus his murder shall be well avenged.
Emperor, I trample thee in Gregory's name ;
Gregory, the supreme ruler of the earth !
I dreamed he had become a little child.
Hush ! hush ! be silent—Oh, be silent I pray,
For nobody knows of this.—
They're coming !—they bring the perfect humanity,
With skeleton morals and a full-fed doom.
Pity me, pity me ! where shall I fly

The howl of Christian souls? It faints on the wind.
(*With steady earnestness*). We do not make ourselves,
but we are made right.

My flesh is ague, and my bones are ice,
And therefore have I led a perfect life,
Which reason, chastity, and heaven approve.
You look at me as if you knew me not;
Or do I see thee far, far off i' the mist?
I've been confused with deep conflicting thoughts,
But you shall hear my name: I am the ruins
Of the city of Magdala! woe and alas!
The sun doth waste himself upon me!

[*Exit, with a moaning anguish.*]

GRE. Wheel on, ye spheres! intensest particles
Must fly off first. Come thou Infallible Death!
I take thee by the hand; but save my sight
From that wan face—mine ears from those lost cries!

*Enter GUIDO, AGNES, and a German Officer,
with Guards.*

GUI. Yonder he stands, confounded!

AGN. Now, advance.

GUI. He wanders blind through ruins of high
hopes,
And feels their chilling shadows. Speak to him!

OFF. Surrender all authority!

AGN. Homicide!

GUI. See'st thou Pope Alexander's famished form
Hovering before thee?

AGN. See'st Duke Godfrey,
In's bloody winding sheet, and hear'st thou not
Matilda's frantic voice?

GRE. (*abstractedly*). Hush! be ye silent:
Oh, be silent I pray!

AGN. Canst thou hope mercy?

GUI. (*aside*). What doth he gaze upon in the mid air,
Far onward? His face changes!——

[*To Officer*]. Let us not
Act cruelly, but firmly, sir.

OFF. (*to Gre*). You are
The Emperor's prisoner!

AGN. To the city bear him!
Our yoke of triumph brooks not this delay.

OFF. Wilt thou not move?

AGN. Drag! drag him hence!

Voices. Away!

GRE. (*with lofty melancholy*). Rude winds, rude winds!
ye shall as easily drag
Tri-zoned Jove's star-set eternity
Back to his past life on Olympus old,
As move my body or soul!

AGN. (*to the Guards*). Are ye struck with frost—
Or stand ye pale i' the disk of a gorgon shield?

[*Shouts outside.*]

OFF. Madam, retire!

GUI. Your stay were perilous!

[*Exeunt. Manet GREGORY.*]

GRE. Am I too strong for death?—let him come
soon!

Enter DAMIANUS, with a small body of the Papal Guards.

DAMI. Oh, save yourself! the Vatican's all a-blaze!
Its choice collections, grandeur, sanctity,
In clouds of ashes now float back to heaven!

GRE. (*rousing as from a trance*). Who hath done this?
beware thou tell'st me truth!

DAMI. It was the Emperor's deed.

GRE. I suffocate

With his name! Burn down the Vatican, dost thou say?

DAMI. And catching fury from the voluble flame,
Raging he now returns in search of thee!

These soldiers do devote their lives—and vow—

GRE. (*passionately*). Ye handful of good soldiers!
brim your hearts

From mine, with all-exterminating wrath,
And armed invulnerably 'gainst man and fiend
By this high mission, acted in God's eye,
And with His nostril's breath impelled, now follow
My forthright course, which never shall be turned!
Oh, for some terrible sword, that I may slay!
Slay! slay!—

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Open space in the Campagna, among the ruins of ancient Rome. Night. The Vatican blazing in the distance. Faint Alarum.*

Enter FABIO, with troops, meeting a German Officer.

FAB. Still holds the fight?

OFF. 'Tis done.

FAB. E'en now I heard

The ring of arms through the dark ruins echoing!

OFF. 'T was but the last gust of a storm outspent—

The frantic rally of some score of spears,
Led on by Gregory.

FAB. He is not dead?

OFF. Unless a miracle hath caught him up
To the stars.

FAB. This dizzy moment—it confounds
The beating of my heart and all my thoughts.
I know not if I dare to wish him dead.

Enter CENTIUS.

OFF. My lord, are you wounded?

FAB. Is the Pontiff slain?

CEN. 'Tis doubtful.

FAB. Sir, beseech you—in few words!

CEN. (*faint and breathless*). With sword and shield,
but in no armour clad,

A storm-black charger bore him towards the ranks
Of the Emperor's force. What passions lit his face!
He rushed, breast on, amidst them, man and steed:
No violent Centaur ever shook an arm
So terrible in air! The very clouds
Seemed to come down, although, indeed, you'll say
'T was but the spurned earth's dust.

FAB. And is he slain?

CEN. I know not; overthrown with many more,
Like to some raging element he rose,
On all sides devastating. He fought afoot,
Till smitten and speared on every side, he fell:
When, o' the instant, Cardinal Brazute
His form bestrode, and to our gleaming swords
A crucifix opposed. Some desperate monks
With screams then bore him off.

Enter the EMPEROR, GUIDO, EBERARDUS, and armed train. Trumpets.

Voices. Hail, Emperor !

And conqueror !

FAB. The saints have blessed our arms.

EMP. Dagon of Rome ! thy heaven-affronting crest
No more shall arch its neck above the world ;
Nor Henry's soul, with threatened torments rent,
Tossed by contending surges of his fears,
Hopes, apprehensions, doubts, and dreadful dreams,
Again be steeped in madness and despair.

GREGORY, *mortally wounded, is borne in by DAMI-
ANUS and Monks ; followed by BRAZUTE and other
Cardinals.*

Rejoice, great line of kings ! the serf-born breath
That sullied your enshrined memories,
Now hovers o'er the gulf ! Set him down here,
And bid the clarions cease !

DAMI. Lay him down gently.

GRE. (*dying*). I hear the roaring of the Vatican
flames !

Its statues fall with Gregory—not its hopes.
Die, heart ! die quickly !

BRAZ. Clement the Third, we name,
Duly by us elected, Sovereign Pontiff !

GUI. 'Tis premature—the Emperor,—

BRAZ. It is done.

Voices. Vivat Sanctus Pater Clemens Tertius !

DAMI. Let not our voices drown his parting sigh ;
Oh, be our silence an intense heart's prayer !

Distant Voices. Vivat Sanctus Pater Clemens Tertius!

GRE. (*faintly to Dami*). We have not failed; my breath fills all the place.

EMP. What hath he murmured, monk, into thy breast?

GRE. (*faintly*). Approach, thou perfect hero, who hath ruled

This day of swords! Approach me with thine ear—
Stoop nearer—I wax faint.

EMP. (*stooping to listen*). What wouldst thou say?

GRE. (*raising himself*). Kiss thou the dust from off thy master's feet! [*Dies.*]

Funeral Mass without. The body of MATILDA, extended upon a bier, is borne across at the back, while the EMPEROR speaks over the body of GREGORY.

EMP. All falsehood follow thy descending soul!
And in thy fall more reason shall we find
To bow with reverence to the See of Rome,
When pious hands shall sanctify its power!

THE END.









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